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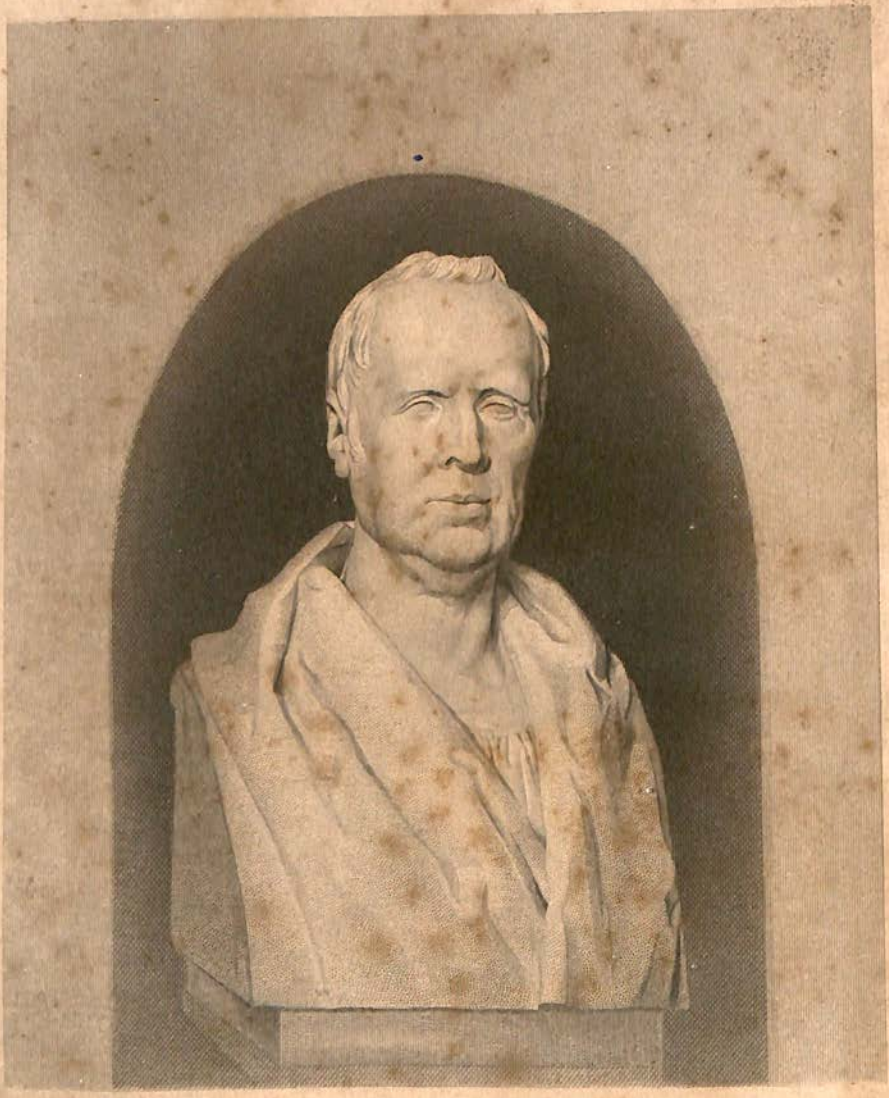
THE

LIFE, LETTERS, AND SPEECHES

OF

LORD PLUNKET.



W. E. Gladstone

Engraved by J. C. Armytage from a Photograph of the Bust by Christopher Moore.

THE

LIFE, LETTERS, AND SPEECHES

OF

LORD PLUNKET.

23710

BY HIS GRANDSON,

THE HON. DAVID PLUNKET.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY PREFACE

BY LORD BROUGHAM.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

DURING Lord Plunket's lifetime the office of collecting his speeches for publication was undertaken by Mr. Edward Berwick,* who was in every way qualified for it. Himself a distinguished disciple of the great Irish orators, he was also the intimate friend of many of them, and especially of Mr. Grattan and of my grandfather. I sincerely regret that he abandoned the task; but I take this opportunity of thanking him for his kindness to me during the progress of the efforts which I have made, with the same object, but under circumstances in every way less favourable. Again, in 1856, Mr. J. C. Hoey published in Dublin a volume of Lord Plunket's speeches, as one of a series of books, brought out under the name of

* President of the Queen's College, Galway.

"Duffy's Irish Orators." This work was very carefully prepared, and has been deservedly popular. It was still, however, thought desirable by many of Lord Plunket's friends, that another collection of his speeches should be made, in which also advantage might be taken of his political papers; and four or five years ago I, influenced mainly by the generous importunities of Lord Brougham, undertook the grateful duty, which has since been often interrupted by other occupations. His lordship, however, at once wrote for me the preface which follows.

The speeches offered to the public in these volumes will be found, with a very few exceptions, to have reference to two political questions, those, namely, of the Legislative Union of 1800, and of the Catholic Emancipation. Of these great controversies I have endeavoured to supply a full and impartial account, or, at least, to reproduce as far as I could the aspect in which they presented themselves to Lord Plunket. Many of his speeches on other subjects I might have added, but they did not appear to me to have been well reported, and it was not in my power to give any fresh lights upon the political topics with which they dealt. Acting

upon a similar principle, I have not at all entered into the details of the last twelve years of Lord Plunket's public life; for though, as Chancellor of Ireland during nearly the whole of the period between 1829 and 1841, he took a leading part in the various questions of the day, he did not identify himself so much with any of them as he had done with those of Union and of Emancipation; and as his interference in public affairs was then rather local and personal, no correspondence of much value has remained as its result.

In the very slight sketch which I have been able to give of Lord Plunket's private character, and of his professional life, I have found many difficulties springing out of my distance from him in point of time, and I have felt some delicacy from my nearness of kinship. I have only to add that I have as far as possible avoided writing or publishing anything that might be offensive to any person now living, or to any political party that can be considered as still extant; and any failure on my part in this respect must be taken as either unavoidable or wholly unintentional.

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PREFACE.

BY LORD BROUGHAM.

THE great eminence of Lord Plunket as a statesman and judge, and especially his almost unrivalled fame as an orator, had long caused general regret that his speeches were never published in a corrected form. His reluctance to undertake the revisal of them was well known, and often complained of by his friends. I repeatedly urged on him the duty which he was neglecting; and gave, as an additional reason for his performing it, the known fact of Curran's collected speeches having been stated, by the editor of Lord Erskine's, as the origin of that invaluable work. At length he gave us a promise to try it, although he expressed great doubt that he could accomplish the object we all had in view. He, however, did set about it, but he found that he made a very slow progress, and experienced great difficulty in finding faithful reports of the greater number. His revisal of

those which he considered tolerably full is of the greatest value, and in this work of course advantage is taken of it. Still it must be a matter of unceasing regret, not only to his friends, but to every admirer of eloquence and to all who devote themselves to the rhetorical art, whether in the senate or in courts of justice, that so vast a body of the noblest orations ever delivered in any age should have perished, and that the great man's fame rests upon tradition, and on a small number of speeches, as it were, samples to justify the accounts of those who lived in his day. In publishing the five volumes of Erskine's speeches, the editor observed that they contained only what occupied three weeks of his long professional life; and it is truly said by Mr. Phillips, in his account of Irish lawyers, that Lord Plunket's talents at the bar were of the greatest eminence, though the high station which he filled in Parliament prevented his forensic achievements from being dwelt upon as they deserved. Nevertheless, both in Chancery, where he chiefly practised, and occasionally before juries, no one surpassed him in his addresses or in his skilful conduct of the cause, the examination of his own witnesses, and the cross-examination of his adversaries. The eclipse of his forensic reputation by the lustre of his senatorial, makes it a duty to dwell upon

his great professional merits, because these are comparatively less known; and the same qualities which distinguished him in Parliament were conspicuous in his course at the bar.

There never was in any court an advocate who worked more constantly by close reasoning, and the plain unadorned statement of facts, skilfully selected and placed in bold relief, and woven into the argument; nor was there ever an advocate who more strictly performed his highest duty of keeping the interests of the cause alone in view, and sacrificing to that cause every personal consideration.

If this be now stated in considering his conduct at Nisi Prius, it is not that in the Courts of Equity he less displayed the same great qualities, but because the temptation to swerve from the right line is much greater in addressing an assembly in some sort popular, than in arguing before a single and professional judge. There his merely legal arguments had the highest merit. He is described by those who often heard him, as avoiding all ostentation of ingenuity or research, and disdaining everything like subtlety, stating his reasons and comparing the authorities, but with perfect simplicity and clearness; his art, but well-concealed art, being the marshalling of his propositions in such an order that you must

assent to them successively, and were not aware how you had been drawn on towards the conclusion he desired to make you adopt, until you found it the last stage of the process. Thus he would distinguish the case in hand by numerous unexpectedly stated particulars from the case cited against him, and which had at first appeared identical and decisive. He would then find as unlooked-for a support to be derived from it in consequence of some fact that had not been duly marked; or if neither support nor escape from it was possible, other authorities were set up against it, or circumstances so urged as to impair its force, if not to neutralize it altogether. In this, as in every part of his addresses, whether to the court or to a jury, his whole object was to convince by arguments, because he deemed that the surest and safest way to the mind of rational men, and because he never threw away a thought upon anything but gaining his cause.

In this essential point he closely resembled Erskine, the greatest of advocates in modern times and second to none of the ancient masters. To him I know of no parallel in our day, except it be Berryer; he, like Plunket, almost his equal as an advocate, has, like Plunket, this superiority to Erskine: that his success in the Senate quite equals his reputation at the Bar.

But the forensic resemblance to Erskine is not confined to the self-denial that has been mentioned, the entire absorption in the cause, the invariable, and, as it were, instinctive sacrifice to it of all feelings save those which could ensure success, all characteristic of Plunket both in the Courts and in Parliament. But he resembled Erskine also in this, that he was eminently an argumentative speaker, his reasonings in all cases, from the most important to those of daily occurrence, being throughout addressed to the understanding of the hearers, with rare appeals to their feelings; and what at the first glance appeared like figure, sentiment, or declamation, was found, when carefully considered, to be an essential portion of the reasoning. This was even more true of Plunket than of Erskine, and it was the characteristic of his eloquence in Parliament. There never was a more argumentative speaker, or one, *experto crede*, more difficult to grapple with and answer; and the extraordinary impression produced by him was caused by the whole texture of his speeches being argumentative; the diction plain but forcible, the turn often epigrammatic; the figures as natural as they were unexpected; so that what had occurred to no one seemed as if every one ought to have anticipated it. But all—strong expressions, terse epigram, happy figure,—

were wholly subservient to the purpose in view, and were manifestly perceived never to be themselves the object, never to be introduced for their own sake. They were the sparks thrown off by the motion of the engine, not fireworks to amuse by their singularity or please by their beauty; all was for use, not ornament; all for work, nothing for display; the object ever in view, the speaker never, either of himself or of the audience. This, indeed, is the invariable result of the highest eloquence, of the greatest perfection of the art and its complete concealment. In all great passages the artist himself, wrapped up in his work, is never thought of by his hearers, equally wrapped up in it, till the moment when they can pause and take breath, and reflect on the mastery which has been exercised over them, and can then first think of the master.

There have been orators in all ages to whom this description applies; to many of them, however, only in occasional passages. But though Lord Plunket rarely, if ever, reached the highest point, attained by so few in any age, of rapid overpowering declamation clothed and combined with argument, he probably surpassed them all in this, that there was no interval whatever in his speech, the whole being an exemplification of the rule: clear statement, close reasoning, felicitous illustra-

tion, all strictly confined to the subject in hand, every portion, without any exception, furthering the process of conviction. That he possessed a lively imagination as well as strong feelings was manifest in almost every speech he delivered; that he had wit in the ordinary sense, the happy power of seizing on resemblances and diversities which escape other men's observation, is equally certain, though, of course, like both his fancy and his feelings, it was ever subdued to the use of the occasion. It was employed, not to season his discourse and give it a relish, but to help the argument. As may well be supposed, his wit appeared more frequently in society; but his jokes had always the same qualities of being perfectly apposite, throwing light upon the subject, and of being singular and unexpected: as when, I recollect, one day, Lord Essex having said he had seen a brother of Sir John Leach, and so much did he resemble the Master of the Rolls that it seemed as if the manner ran in the family, Plunket exclaimed,—"I should as soon have thought of a wooden leg running in a family."

There was on one occasion a very remarkable instance of his readiness at taking up a subject under extraordinary difficulties, and of this my personal recollection is very distinct, for I had in the debate experience of his power. On the case

of Windham Quin, brought before the House of Commons by the friends of Chief Baron O'Grady, we examined witnesses for above a week, and Sir Robert Peel sat by as supporting his friend Quin, heard all the evidence, and, indeed, took a part in the examination of the witnesses. The evidence was of course printed, and Plunket's only knowledge of our proceedings was from reading it on his journey to London. Peel made an elaborate and able defence of his friend, and Plunket took the same side; but there was this remarkable difference between the two speeches: Peel, familiar with the case in all its particulars, spoke in mitigation of censure, admitting the charge to have been proved. He had gone over the ground, without perceiving that there was enough to support a plea of not guilty. Plunket at once took that course; he had found the materials for it in the printed evidence, though absent during the whole proceedings; and having had to answer his wonderful speech, I can truly say that no one could have supposed he had not been present. This incident was often referred to, as showing the difference between an ordinary person, however able, but unprofessional, and one with the experience and habits of an advocate. The admirable defence by Plunket was justly ascribed to his professional

skill, and no one questioned the ability of Peel or his heartiness in supporting his friend. It is an instance of the unfairness of party spirit, that Plunket, for taking a line different from that of the opposition to which he belonged, was subject for months to the most violent abuse, although he justly urged that the question was strictly judicial, and that he was bound to take the part of the accused if he conscientiously believed him to be unjustly attacked. Certainly I regarded the case in this light, and had no other justification for the course I took against him than Plunket had in defending him.

Though the great characteristic of his eloquence was the clearness of his argument and the sacrifice of everything to the advancement of his cause, yet his figurative passages were the object of unmixed admiration, even as results of the imagination, and independently of their invariable introduction to help the argument, indeed as portions of it. His description of the limitation of actions by time is perhaps the most celebrated instance. It is the use of an image familiar to all men's minds, of Time, as an old man with a scythe in his hand, which the orator says he uses to mow down the muniments of title; but the lawgiver places an hour-glass in his other hand, to mete out those periods of possession, which supply the

security, that the muniments he has destroyed can no longer give. This famous passage was in a speech early in life, before the Court of Chancery. But to show the utter groundlessness of the rumour circulated that his powers had become enfeebled by age, I well recollect a speech in the House of Lords as late as the Reform Bill of 1830, when he explained how he, once an adversary, had become a friend to reform; and this speech had all the transcendent merits of his best days, giving an image at once most picturesque and most strictly applicable to the whole subject, which it not only illustrated but demonstrated. "In those days reform approached us in a far different guise; it came as a felon, and we resisted: it now comes as a creditor; we admit the debt and only dispute on the instalments by which it shall be paid."

So perfectly sustained and uninterrupted was the reasoning in his speeches, that each sentence, and oftentimes each member of a sentence, was a complete argument. Thus in that famous attack on those who absurdly pretended that the Roman Catholics were slaves, while they possessed most of the rights of their fellow-citizens with the power which these privileges confer, he asked:— "Do you believe that such a body, possessed of such a station, can submit to contumely and ex-

clusion? That they will stand behind your chair at the public banquet? The less valuable in sordid computation the privilege, the more marked the insult in refusing it, and the more honourable the anxiety for possessing it. Miserable and unworthy wretches must they be if they ceased to aspire to it; base and dangerous hypocrites if they dissembled their wishes; formidable instruments of domestic or foreign tyranny if they did not entertain them. The liberties of England would not for half a century remain proof against the contact and contagion of four millions of opulent and powerful subjects who disregarded the honour of the State, and felt utterly uninterested in the constitution. In coming forward, then, with this claim of honourable ambition, they at once afford you the best pledge of their sincerity and the most satisfactory evidence of their title. They claim the benefit of the ancient vital principle of the constitution, namely, that the honours of the State should be open to the talents and the virtues of all its members. Their adversaries invert the order of all civil society. They have made the Catholics an aristocracy, and they would treat them as a mob. They give to the lowest of the rabble, if he is a Protestant, what they refuse to the head of the Peerage if he is a Catholic. They shut out my Lord Fingall from the State, and they

make his footman a member of it; and this strange confusion of all social order they dignify with the name of the British Constitution, and the proposal to consider the best and most conciliatory mode of correcting it they cry down as a dangerous and presumptuous innovation."

His feelings were very strong, and I well recollect his being rendered unfit for all public exertions during months by his brother's death. In some of his speeches this tenderness of disposition was manifest. His warm affection for Grattan, combined with profound reverence, constantly appeared. In the great speech of 1821, declared by Mackintosh to place him before all the orators of the age, he was overpowered by those sentiments. After referring to the great losses which the Catholic question had sustained in the death of its supporters; "but above all," he said, "when I dwell upon that last overwhelming loss—the loss of that great man in whose place I this night unworthily stand, and with the description of whose exalted merits I would not trust myself—God knows, I cannot feel any triumph! Walking before the sacred images of these illustrious dead, as in a public and solemn procession, shall we not dismiss all party feeling, all angry passions, and unworthy prejudices? I will not talk of triumph; I will not mix in this act of public justice anything that can

awaken personal animosity." The effect of this noble passage on all parties in the House is said by those present to baffle description.

It is deeply to be lamented that Lord Plunket had made so little progress in the revisal of his Parliamentary speeches, and of those at the Bar still less. They were most numerous, and when we consider that the five volumes of Erskine's contained but a very small portion of those which he delivered in twenty-seven years, we may well conjecture that an equal number were delivered by Plunket during his forty years' practice, though he did not attain full business immediately, like Erskine. The present publication gives all his speeches in Parliament, which either he revised, or there are the means of finishing now. Of Mr. Fox's, as published, very few were corrected by himself, still fewer of Mr. Pitt's; and on the occasion of his speech on the breaking out of the war in 1803, the greatest he ever made, and of which Mr. Fox said that the orators of Greece and Rome would have admired, perhaps envied it, an accident prevented the gallery being opened to the reporters, so that the heads only are preserved, and hardly any part of the magnificent peroration, of which I have heard persons present say that it almost took away their breath. Windham's speeches were corrected by himself, and Burke's were almost all either

published or revised for the press by himself. But Plunket has this great advantage over him in the delivery of his speeches: that he always had a most attentive audience; whereas during the greater part of Burke's time, that is, until his quarrel with the Whigs, the House would not listen to him; and Lord Erskine says, "I am old enough to remember the immortal orations of Burke upon this momentous subject [American war] delivered to the almost empty benches of the House of Commons." * This was owing to the habit of dissertation into which the great man had fallen; for of course Lord Erskine refers to the latter part of the American war.

The gift of eloquence was always reckoned by these celebrated orators as only to be prized for the uses to which it was made subservient; and its greatest masters concurred on the greatest occasion of its display in pronouncing that its estimation depends upon the virtuous and rational use of it.† To defend the cause of oppressed innocence, to hurl defiance at the oppressor's head, to resist the march of wicked rulers, Erskine and Plunket held to be the purpose for which their eloquence had been bestowed. But perhaps neither of those great orators sufficiently prized

* Introduction to *Fox's Speeches*, vol. i. xxvi.

† Demosthenes and Æschines in their Orations on the Crown.

its importance in diffusing useful knowledge, in furthering intellectual refinement, in extirpating prevailing errors, in reviving a hatred of the cruelty and fraud of bad rulers, however crowned with success, in proclaiming the glories of blessed peace above the cursed glories of war, in hastening the arrival of the bright day when the dominion of sound sense shall chase away the heavy mists that linger round the base of the social pyramid. Such are the noble uses of eloquence in ordinary and more quiet times. In such times their gift was not lost. But the one at the Bar and the other in the Senate employed their eloquence in resisting oppression, in defending the liberties of their countrymen, in protecting others, the prey of the trader's guilty avarice or the soldier's more guilty ambition.

Plunket's public life, which only the unreflecting clamours of faction have charged with inconsistency, was peculiarly marked by uniform devotion to the principles which he had deliberately adopted and steadfastly maintained. His earliest act of leaving the dissenting community, of which his father had been a respected pastor, was the result of much patient and enlightened reflection; for no one had stronger religious feelings, and no one was more thoroughly conversant in the opposite doctrines and observances of the two churches.

Erskine made the same change. The godly family from which he sprang was as much opposed to episcopacy as possible, and he was educated in Scotland, where the same prevailing tenets are strong. But beside the known fact of his conforming to the English church both while at Cambridge and ever after, he has left an imperishable record of his opinions in his introduction to *Fox's Speeches*,—"If," he says,* "the Church of England were vulnerable in her doctrines or in her discipline, maintaining her ascendancy, like the Romish Church, by the ignorance and darkness of her adherents, her security might in some measure depend upon the penal discouragement of Dissent; but when I reflect upon the unexampled wisdom of her original reformers in all that they abolished, as well as all that they preserved; when I consider the manifest foundations of her faith on the sacred authorities of Scripture; the simplicity and purity of her Liturgy, assimilated by time as well as by its own intrinsic excellence to the affections of the English people; when I advert to the general learning and morals of her ministers and their usefulness throughout the country, I doubt with Mr. Fox whether the restraints and disabilities originally set on foot for her protection, and which are now insensibly

* Vol. i. p. 21.

wearing away under the indulgent administration of our Government, may not have been the nurses if not the parents of sectaries in every part of the kingdom. Their foundations were laid when there was much less toleration than at present, and if the Church feels any serious alarm from their expansion, she should lend her hand to the discouragement of their communities, by inviting the legislature to let the law pass over them without the very knowledge of their existence."

That Plunket steadily pursued one course as the friend of civil and religious liberty cannot be denied or doubted, and in one respect he was more fortunate than Erskine, who, having been, as he says, "educated in an almost superstitious repugnance to the Roman Catholic religion, found it difficult to bring up his mind to the only specific for its gradual decline and extinction," * — the repeal of the penal code. On this Plunket never felt the least doubt, nor has he ever been assailed on this ground. But he gave great offence to our Whig opposition by the part he took in supporting the famous Six Acts of 1819. We deeply lamented the powerful assistance thus lent to these measures; we were convinced that he took an erroneous view of the facts, and made an incorrect estimate of the effects ascribed to the

* *Fox's Speeches*, vol. i. p. 22.

remedies proposed for the mischief not unjustly apprehended from the state of the country, which was somewhat distracted, but by no means to the extent believed by him. We also differed entirely from him on this main point of the case, that the existing law, had it been enforced, was quite sufficient to put down the evils complained of. When I encountered him in this conflict, I recollect having predicted that the dissolution that was almost certain the next spring would show the fallacy of the argument in behalf of the new laws, because they contained a proviso against public meetings, not, however, extending to a general election; and accordingly that election took place under the old and ordinary law, and without the least breach of the peace or any alarm whatever. Although, then, he was plainly in the wrong, it must be remembered that he erred in company with some of our greatest statesmen, Lord Wellesley and Lord Grenville; and it is certain that after the heats of party warfare had cooled, most of us admitted that some restraint upon the right of public meetings had become necessary for the preservation of this valuable privilege to the people. One of the stoutest supporters of our party, and of all liberal principles, Lord Hutchinson, very distinctly stated that, aware of the risks this popular right ran, he felt thankful for restric-

tions which he deemed necessary to its preservation having been propounded by the Tory party and not by the Whigs. This is a most powerful defence of the course taken by Plunket against those party attacks to which, in connection with Lord Grenville, he was exposed.

Some years before, in 1815, he had differed with his political friends on the great question of the conduct to be pursued on Napoleon's return from Elba, and here also he agreed with Lord Grenville, though Lord Wellesley took the opposite view. We must allow that the case for war was strong in itself, and may grant that its supporters were right, independently of the event which speedily came, and made all difference with them impossible. Not being in Parliament at that time I took no part in these discussions, but the inclination of my opinion was with Lord Grey and Lord Wellesley, though I felt that the Government and Lord Grenville and Plunket, and Mr. Grattan, who also differed with his party, had made a very strong case, and I now admit that we were altogether in the wrong. But I well remember the factious violence with which Plunket was assailed, and the disgust which it gave to all candid and rational persons even among the Whigs themselves.

Such are the fruits of party, in its abuse—abuse

to which it is ever prone. It is hurtful to the interests of the community (even when not abused) by keeping so many of its ablest men out of the public service, and employing their talents in conflict with each other. It is, when abused, corrupting to the people, and injurious to honest principle, by making opinions on the most important subjects be assumed or affected for factious purposes,—as it were the counters with which the profligate game is played out. At the very best it is a clumsy machine for conducting the affairs of the State. But of its many faults there is none more constant and more deplorable than the encouragement of calumny, by making the body of the faction responsible for it, and thus giving vent to the slanders engendered by individual malice or spleen. How often have we seen the result of the habits thus created and become a second nature not to be cast off, even outliving their powers of mischief, while their malignity was unexhausted: like superannuated vipers that still have their bag of venom, but no longer the teeth through which to squirt it into the wounds of their prey.

But it was not by mere vituperation that faction worked against Plunket. The most gross and unjustifiable act ever done by party, combining violence and ingratitude with fraud,

was his removal, in 1841, from the high office he had so ably filled, when the Whig Government was on the very eve of being removed by the result of the dissolution, then so unjustifiably resorted to, against all the principles of the constitution, for the purpose of gaining strength to the party which they well knew were soon to be the opposition.

An attempt had been made to obtain his resignation eighteen months before, on what he believed to be a false statement, and had failed; and the request was now renewed, but in terms which made it impossible for him to refuse compliance. His magnanimous silence on the subject, to which after the day of taking leave of the Bar, he never alluded in any way, either in public or in private, can only be ascribed to the kindness of his nature and his reluctance to give pain, all the parties to the intrigue having been his personal friends.

Vile as this whole proceeding was, the course taken to defend it was worse than the act itself. It was pretended that a falling off in his powers had been observed, and that his faculties were declining: than which no assertion could be made more utterly groundless. His speeches in Parliament were marked by more entire vigour of body and mind than at any former period of his sitting

in the House of Lords. The very year of the first attempt to obtain the Great Seal from him, his defence of Lord Normanby was distinguished by his full vigour of argument and his matchless skill, as I can testify from having had to encounter him in the debate. His judicial conduct, both in the Court of Appeal, and in the Irish Chancery, has been sifted closely, with a view to examine all the grounds of the defence made for the Whig job, and it appears by the Lords' Journals that the only reversals of his decrees were of those made before the pretence of his failing faculties was heard of, or after the attempt frustrated in 1839, and successful in 1841. Two cases in 1841 demonstrate how entire his powers were that very year of the intrigue. In Stokes *v.* Heron he made a decree which Sir E. Sugden reversed. But in 1845, on appeal to the House of Lords, three Law Lords concurred in reversing the judgment of Sir E. Sugden, affirming Lord Plunket. In Creed *v.* Creed he had reversed a decree of Sir E. Sugden, and the Lords upon appeal affirmed his judgment of reversal. Lord Cottenham was in the Lords upon both these appeals, and it is certain that upon him was cast by his colleagues the blame of the unconstitutional dissolution of 1841. He therefore was well aware of the conduct towards Lord Plunket which accom-

panied that measure, and in all likelihood was acquainted with the pretexts urged in support of that conduct.

There can be no instance of the error of party compared to this treatment of Plunket, except it be the grand mistake committed with respect to Mr. Pitt, in 1782: an error so disastrous in its consequences both to its authors and to the country. Upon the formation of the Rockingham ministry, when Mr. Pitt had greatly distinguished himself in Parliament, not only by his eloquence, but also, by a kind of miracle, as an accomplished debater, and had powerfully assisted the Whigs in overthrowing Lord North's administration, with every claim, both personal and political, not to say hereditary, to a place in the new Cabinet, he was passed over in favour of a Cavendish, member of a great Whig family, by himself one of the most obscure and inefficient persons that were ever in office as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

When Plunket entered the Irish Parliament, the secession had taken place from the House of Commons of all the leaders; but he held the principles and followed the example of Mr. Grattan, to whom his friendship and his devotion were through life constant and sincere. When he came into the Parliament of England, the leader whom he principally confided in and generally followed

was Lord Grenville; and as nothing could be more untrue than that he ever belonged to the Whig party, nothing could be more unjust than these attacks upon him, when he pursued, as in 1815 and 1819, a course different from theirs.

These volumes give but a faint impression of this great orator's eloquence, but they convey a correct view of the important measures in support of which it was employed with such powerful effect, and of the sound principles which at every period of his life, and in all situations, in and out of office, he maintained and inculcated. Attached to him as a friend, filled with the admiration which all felt for his genius, I may truly adopt Lord Erskine's words in closing the preface to Mr. Fox's speeches, that "I regard it as a most happy and honourable circumstance of my life to have had the opportunity of thus publicly expressing my veneration for his memory."

LIFE AND SPEECHES

OF

LORD PLUNKET.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH AND PARENTAGE — FRIENDSHIP OF BARRY YELVERTON — CAREER IN THE UNIVERSITY—THE COLLEGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY —HABITS AND CORRESPONDENCE WHILST A STUDENT AT LINCOLN'S INN.

IN the beginning of the last century one branch of the Plunket family was established at Glennan, in the county of Monaghan, where the Reverend Patrick Plunket officiated as Presbyterian minister. His only son, Thomas, was educated at Glasgow University for the same profession, and was at the age of twenty-two licensed by the Presbytery of Monaghan. He soon distinguished himself by his zeal and ability; and the following year was called to the more important ministry of Enniskillen, the county town of Fermanagh. In 1749, he married Mary, daughter of Redmond Conyngham,

a gentleman of position in that town, and a family of two daughters and four sons grew up around him. The youngest of these, born on the 1st of July, 1764, was William Conyngham, afterwards Lord Plunket.

For twenty years the Rev. Mr. Plunket laboured faithfully in Enniskillen until the reputation he had earned by his eloquence as a preacher, and by his many admirable social qualities, having come to the knowledge of the congregation of the Strand Street Chapel in Dublin, he was induced to undertake their ministry. He thus became the pastor of the wealthiest and most influential dissenting community in Ireland.

It is much to be regretted that only in tradition have any records of the life of this remarkable man been preserved; for he was not only a popular preacher amongst the members of his religious persuasion, but possessed besides very brilliant social advantages. It is said that he was looked up to as almost the first amongst the humorists and men of letters of a time when a character for wit and scholarship was beyond all others coveted by the leaders of opinion in Ireland, and he certainly possessed to a remarkable extent a power of attracting the affection as well as the esteem of nearly all who knew him. Nor was his circle of friends by any means restricted within the limits

of his own sect; the Dublin politicians, courtiers, and men of eminence in the learned professions, without distinction of creed or party, sought the society and availed themselves of the literary criticisms of "Dr. Plunket," as he was familiarly called. On the subject of oratory—then popular beyond all other intellectual pursuits amongst Irish gentlemen—his opinion was most valued, and it is said that a comfortable seat in the strangers' gallery of the Irish House of Commons was always by courtesy allowed to him, which long after his death was known as "Dr. Plunket's stall."

The good clergyman continued to preside in Strand Street Chapel until his death, which occurred in the year 1778. It was then found that he had been unable to make any provision for his family, other than the sound and liberal education which he had given to his children. A subscription was at once set on foot amongst his late parishioners and many friends, who responded with a ready and warm-hearted liberality. Indeed, so ample were the funds thus provided that Mr. Plunket's widow was enabled to keep house with her younger children in as easy circumstances as she enjoyed before her husband's death.

At this time, her eldest son Patrick was already a practising physician, and ultimately rose to the very first rank of the profession in Dublin, and

her second son David had emigrated to America, where he served with distinction under Washington in the war of Independence, and afterwards realized a considerable fortune as a merchant.* The third, Robert, was, like his eldest brother, educated as a doctor, but died whilst very young. It was, therefore, with her two unmarried daughters, Catherine and Isabella, and her fourth son, William Conyngham, a school-boy fourteen years old, that Mrs. Plunket continued to live, after her husband's death, in their small house in Jervis Street.

I cannot resist the temptation of introducing here an old-fashioned letter which I have found, preserved evidently with great care, amongst Lord Plunket's papers. It was addressed to him shortly after his father's death by his maternal uncle, the Rev. William Conyngham, rector of the parish of Aghanamunshen, near Letterkenny, in the diocese of Raphoe :—

DEAR WILLY,— *Letterkenny, August 6, 1778.*

BY a long confinement by the gout which affected both hands and feet, I was prevented from acknowledging

* He was lost at sea when returning from the West Indies to Ireland, and left by his will a sum of about 40,000*l.*, half to a lady in America to whom he was engaged in marriage, and half to his brother William. None of this, however, came to Lord Plunket's hands, owing, I believe, to the knavery of an attorney employed by him to recover it.

the receipt of your letter (of an old date) sooner. I thank ye for your favour. The favourable accounts I have of you, not only with respect to your acquisitions as a scholar but with respect to your morals, give me pleasure. In all your pursuits I hope you will be under the influence of religion: let its precepts be your guide. An early impression of your duty will be of great advantage. *Quo semel imbuta est recens servabit odorem testa diu.* You are much indebted to the uncommon friendship of Counsellor Yelverton, and I doubt not of your retaining a grateful sense of it. I must repeat it: his friendship is uncommon. I send you a trifle by your brother Pat—only two guineas, but I left you a memorial of me in my will. I shall expect to hear from you soon, and pray let me know ye number of ye house where Captain John Conyngham's* widow lives (in Queen Street, I think). My good wishes attend your mother. A shaking hand will hinder me to proceed. God bless you,

Your affectionate uncle,

WILLIAM CONYNGHAM.

For Mr. William Conyngham Plunket,
At the Widow Plunket's, in
Jervis Street, No. 32, Dublin.

"Counsellor Yelverton" here mentioned was the celebrated Barry Yelverton, then one of the ablest advocates and most stirring politicians at the Irish bar; he was afterwards appointed Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and created, in 1795, Baron Avonmore. He had been the admirer and intimate friend of the Rev. Mr. Plunket; and his own son, who

* Captain in H.M.'s 63rd Regiment.

was of the same age as William Plunket, attended with him the day-school then kept in Dublin by the Rev. Lewis Kerr. A school-boy friendship sprang up between the lads, which Yelverton's father took pains to encourage; he often invited young Plunket to his house, questioned him as to his studies, and encouraged him to adopt with confidence the profession of the law which he intended his son should also follow. It has been recorded of William Plunket, by one who sometimes met him on these occasions at the house of Mr. Yelverton, that he was "a clever, hard-headed boy, very attentive to his books, and very negligent of his person." In 1779, Yelverton and Plunket, who had both just attained the age of fifteen, became students of the University of Dublin, Plunket taking a high place at the entrance examination.

Thomas Addis Emmett,* who had been at

* Thomas Addis Emmett, the second son of a Dublin physician, was born in 1764, obtained his degree of Doctor of Medicine at Edinburgh, afterwards studied for the Irish bar; he was a young man of great talents and amiability, but being implicated in the conspiracy of United Irishmen, he was arrested in 1798, upon a charge of high treason. His punishment was commuted to imprisonment in Fort St. George in consideration of his giving the Government full information of the nature and organization of the conspiracy, though he honourably refused to afford any evidence that might inculpate others. He was afterwards allowed to go into exile on the Continent, thence in 1804 he emigrated to America, where he practised as a barrister with great success, and was Attorney General for New York State in 1812. He died in 1827. He was author of some medical tracts, and also some fragments of Irish history illustrative of the condition of the Roman Catholics and of the system of the United Irishmen. His career must not be confounded with that of his unfortunate brother Robert, who was born in 1780, and was executed for high treason in 1803.

school with them, had matriculated the year before at the age of fourteen. These three gradually formed around them a circle of friends, small at first, but which expanded until it embraced all the best intellects of the undergraduate classes. The men by whom Plunket found himself year after year opposed in the examination were some of the ablest scholars that the University of Dublin has ever trained: but he nevertheless succeeded in twice carrying off the class prize: an honour then reserved for one competitor at each examination. In his third year he obtained a scholarship on very high marks, and about the same time joined the College Historical Society. Plunket's after life was largely influenced by the experience and successes he gained, and by the friendships he formed whilst a member of this famous debating club, which contains upon its muster-rolls almost every name that for a century has become illustrious in the learned professions or in the literature of Ireland, and still subsists in vigour within the walls of "Old Trinity."

At the time that Plunket joined its ranks the society had reached its most brilliant epoch, and even exercised no small influence upon politics in Dublin. Its foundations had been laid in the year 1747, by Edmund Burke, who, with five others, had started what he called "The Historical

Club." The minutes of their proceedings are still extant in the handwriting of Burke.* This and several successive debating societies, of which Grattan, Avonmore, and Hussey Burgh were members, though entirely composed of students of the University, had held their meetings outside its walls; but in 1770 was established, within the bosom of Trinity College, the Historical Society,† whose object it was "to cultivate history, oratory, and composition." Its ranks were quickly filled by the senior students, none being admitted who had not entered upon their third college year. The members of this mimic Parliament, which held its sittings on every Wednesday evening throughout the college terms, took the deepest interest in its management, as well as in its debates and examinations, all of which were entirely under their own control, while the excitement of their meetings

* They are now in the possession of the Hon. Judge Berwick.

† Between the members of the Historical Society and the debating societies of Edinburgh, Oxford, and Cambridge there exists a reciprocal right of honorary membership. Thomas Addis Emmett availed himself of this privilege when in Scotland, but in 1798 it was resolved by the Speculative Society, on the motion of the secretary, seconded by Mr. Henry Brougham, "That as Thomas Addis Emmett has acknowledged himself a member of the executive directory of the Irish Union, and has confessed himself privy to the carrying on of a treasonable correspondence with France, his name should be erased from the list of the Speculative Society. (Carried unanimously.) The records of this venerable institution are still preserved in the library of the College Historical Society, Dublin, and interesting abstracts of them may be found in Vol. iv. of the *Irish Quarterly Review* (1854), and in an address delivered by Robert Walsh, auditor of the ociety, on the 9th of November, 1864, printed at the University press, 1864.

was heightened by the presence of large numbers of the public. That age was instinct with intellectual activity, and men's minds sought anxiously for opportunities of investigating the history and the philosophy of ancient times, in order to find precepts and examples for the age in which they lived. This tendency had received in Ireland a peculiar development; the writings of Swift, Molyneux, and Lucas had stirred society to its depths, and there was abroad a restless dissatisfied feeling amongst all classes.

The Historical Society also derived much dignity and importance from the intimate relations that existed between it and the Irish House of Commons. By a rule of the society, gentlemen were allowed to continue their names on its books long after their immediate connection with the University had ceased. Some of the representatives of Irish towns and counties gladly availed themselves of such an opportunity for the practice of public speaking, and it is interesting to find recorded on the minutes of the society, as a member's excuse for non-participation in its debates, "compulsory attendance in the House of Commons." On the other hand, in the Irish Parliament House, a gallery was specially set apart for university students, where they might imbibe a love of eloquence and of liberty, and

learn the principles of a just and proud ambition, the details of public business, and the rudiments of constitutional law.

In 1782, when Plunket was admitted into the society, all these causes seemed to have combined to make its meetings peculiarly brilliant and its prizes peculiarly popular. In that year the patriotic party in Ireland, with whom nearly all the youth of the University sympathized, had achieved their short-lived triumph. From their places in the House of Commons, the members of the Historical Society listened night after night to the eloquence and shared the enthusiasm with which Henry Grattan and his associates stirred the Irish people to assert their independent nationality. They saw an army of nearly 90,000 volunteers assemble and line the streets of Dublin, through which the patriot members walked to their regenerated assembly; and whilst every Irishman of ardent imagination regarded these events as the beginning of a meridian age of independence and prosperity, none foresaw the future of humiliation and disaster which closed the history of the last century in Ireland.

At that moment of intense political and social excitement, the Historical Society must have presented splendid lures to such an ambition as was young William Plunket's, and afforded him at the

same time an opportunity peculiarly suited for the development of his special powers. He entered into the competition of the society with all the energy of his character, and although the greater number of his associates were his seniors, he seems almost at once to have taken a leading part amongst them, and soon to have become the master spirit of their debates. In his second year of membership (1783) he was twice elected president, opened the following session with an address from the chair, and obtained successively the medals for oratory, history, and composition. When a favourite member of the society (the Rev. Mr. Cleghorn) died, he was requested to deliver an eulogistic oration upon his virtues, and received a special medal for this service. He was also awarded an extraordinary prize for his essay, *A Defence of the Age*, which the society determined to print, but the copy of it has been unfortunately lost. During his career in this society, Plunket formed around him a company of friends and admirers, amongst whom were afterwards found some of the most remarkable Irishmen of their day. Charles Kendal Bushe, of whom the greatest modern authority on the subject said that "his merits as a speaker were of the highest description," and that "his power of narrative has not perhaps been equalled."

Magee,* afterwards Archbishop of Dublin, and author of the comprehensive and eloquent argument on the Atonement, still a text-book in the Irish Divinity School. Peter Burrowes, an honest but eccentric genius, the friend and idol of all who knew him, possessed too of such rare powers of real pathos and of honest denunciation, that in these respects his reported speeches are second

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* Brougham's *Statesmen of the Reign of George III.* Charles K. Bushe was born in the county of Kilkenny, 1767, entered Dublin University, 1782, obtained scholarship in 1783, was called to the Bar in 1790, represented the borough of Callan in the Irish Parliament, eloquently opposed the Union, was appointed Solicitor-General in 1805, and held that office until 1822, when he was appointed Chief Justice of the King's Bench; resigned in 1841, died 1843.

Peter Burrowes, born in Portarlington 1753, called to the Bar, 1785, quickly won the character of a successful advocate and learned lawyer; appointed counsel to the Customs, 1806, and a Commissioner of Bankrupts, 1821; died 1841.

George Miller, born in Dublin, 1764, entered the University, 1779; obtained fellowship in 1789; was professor of history in college, and afterwards head-master of Armagh Royal School.

William Magee, born in Enniskillen, 1764, entered college, 1780, obtained fellowship, 1788; ordained, 1790; senior fellow, 1800; Bishop of Raphoe, 1819; Archbishop of Dublin, 1822; died, 1834.

Sir Laurence Parsons, born 1758, represented in the Irish Parliament the University of Dublin, and, after his father's death, the King's County, until the year 1807, when he succeeded to the Earldom of Rosse on the death of his uncle; died, 1844. The present earl, of astronomical reputation, is his son.

Theobald Wolfe Tone, born in Dublin, 1763; by profession a barrister, he founded the society of United Irishmen. Commencing his political agitation in 1790, he was compelled to leave the country in 1795; he proceeded to America, but returning to Europe the next year, he prevailed upon the French Directory to send an expedition to assist the Irish rebels. The French fleet was scattered by a storm and Tone was captured. On the 19th of November, 1798, he committed suicide in prison in order to avoid the humiliation of a public execution. His diaries, edited by his son, afford one of the most interesting autobiographies ever published.

only to those of Curran. George Miller, afterwards University Professor of History, and author of the masterly work, *History Philosophically Considered.* Sir Laurence Parsons, the liberal and popular Irish patrician, who so brilliantly opposed the Union; Theobald Wolfe Tone, and Thomas Addis Emmett. Such were the men with whom Plunket formed at this time the closest friendship.

As the students were allowed to choose for themselves the topics of their debates, these may be taken as reflecting the spirit of political excitement that then agitated Irish society. On the 31st of December, 1783, Plunket moved "that it would be well for the Americans now to expel the loyalists," but was outvoted by a large majority. On another night, the question being, "whether Ireland, if refused the lately demanded equality, would be justified in breaking off the connection?" no one was found bold enough to vote on the negative side, while again Plunket carried with him a large majority for the proposition, "that an hereditary was preferable to an elective monarchy." It is curious to find Wolfe Tone maintaining the Conservative side of the old debate, "whether property should be a necessary qualification for political power," and Emmett arguing strongly that it was impossible

for Ireland to exist as a free state independent of Great Britain. A few years later he paid the penalty of exile for endeavouring to prove in practice that she might do so.

At the time when these questions were argued in the society, all the men whose names I have mentioned were united in the pursuit of common objects of ambition and in the genial intercourse of college conviviality; a few years later the very same topics became questions of life or death to some of them, and led to coldness and separation amongst many friends. But of the friendships then formed which were not rudely broken by political antagonism, not one was ever afterwards impaired. Firmly and fast the members of the old Historical Society of that day held together, till one by one they died in the fulness of honour and fame. With Burrowes, and Bushe, and Magee, all of whom he survived, Plunket maintained the closest friendship. When, on an occasion sixty years after their fellow-membership in the society, he and Burrowes parted, feeling that they had met probably for the last time, they wept. Magee's family had lived in Enniskillen, and he had been reared under the same roof with Plunket. By a strange coincidence, when the one resided in the palace in Stephen's Green, as Archbishop of Dublin, the other lived next door as Lord Chan-

cellor; and from first to last, they seldom took any step in life without mutually consulting one another. Charles Kendal Bushe and Plunket, after serving together as Solicitor and Attorney-General, divided between them the honours of the Courts of King's Bench and Chancery, and became more closely connected by the intermarriage of their children.

For a short time after the members of this famous college set had finished their academical careers, many of them continued their intimacy without interruption. Plunket still lived with his mother and sisters in Jervis Street; and at their frugal board Magee, and Wolfe Tone, and Bushe, and Burrowes, and Thomas Addis Emmett were sometimes guests. Having finished his Dublin law-terms, Plunket's name was entered on the books of Lincoln's Inn in 1784; and for a year and a half he lived in London and its suburbs, chumming with Peter Burrowes and some other Irish students in very humble lodgings. If, indeed, it had not been for the encouragement and relaxation which this companionship afforded, his life and prospects must at this time have been monotonous and dreary in the extreme. For he found himself wholly dependent upon the kindness of his father's friends for all the expenses of preparation for his profession; and was in the

painful position of one who, whilst the pensioner upon the bounty of his equals, could look forward to but a distant and uncertain prospect of repaying their generosity. But William Plunket's pride and courage were of no ordinary temper, and he applied himself to the drudgery of legal preparation with unflagging zeal and accuracy. The note-books which he filled at this time afford a curious record of the manner in which he acquired his exact and well-arranged knowledge of the great principles of jurisprudence, and trained his matchless memory for the performance of the intellectual feats which so often astonished those who met him in after life. In these books I find each doctrine canvassed and tested by a comparison of cases bearing upon it, and by the consideration of remote consequences that might arise in applying it to practice. Thus, in studying Fearne on Contingent Remainders, which treatise seems then to have been his favourite work, he debated every inch of ground with the author, and in reading Blackstone and Coke satisfied his own mind of each dictum before admitting its validity.

During these cheerless days of struggle, privation, and study, Plunket's spirits were constantly sustained by the affectionate and confident letters which he received from his mother and sisters,

and which he ever after carefully preserved. From these it is manifest (for I have not found any of his answers to them) that he had more than once resolved to abandon his endeavours to become a barrister with a view of obtaining some occupation less ambitious, but which might relieve him and his family from immediate dependence upon the purses of their friends; but those at home would not listen to such suggestions; and on one occasion I find that his sister Catherine, when forcing upon him a small loan of money which he had at first rejected, insists that he shall repay her with heavy interest "as soon as he is Attorney-General, as she expects he will be speedily." No doubt such fond hopes have in many other similar cases been held out; but perhaps in no other instance have they been so quickly and brilliantly fulfilled.

During the intervals of his London terms Plunket and his friends had lodgings together, first at Lambeth, and subsequently at Ham Common. One of their party at Lambeth was the Honourable George Knox, who had been an intimate friend of Plunket's in his college days. He afterwards represented the University of Dublin both in the Irish and the United Parliament, and was a man of considerable ability and learning, and of great amiability. Before Plunket and the

rest of his party removed to Ham Common, Mr. Knox went abroad to travel, and a correspondence was kept up between him and Plunket, which has come into my hands. A few short extracts from the letters of the latter will throw some light upon the habits of life and thought of the writer.

DEAR KNOX, *July* 23, 1785.

. . . . . .

. . . . As soon as we were sufficiently composed after your departure from London, which was not until we had traced you in our mind's eye from stage to stage, had landed you in safety in Paris, and even got you through the exordium of your oration to the ambassador, we began to prepare for quitting the melancholy scene, and after spending above a week in resolving what we should do, and almost another in not doing what we had resolved on, we settled on the plains of Ham Common, from whence I now write to you. The situation is a very tempting one and might lead a man of an enterprising temper and reduced circumstances into some desperate exertion; if my courage continues as high and my purse as low during the summer as I feel them at present, I must begin to study a course of Crown law in order to preserve my honesty by raising some wholesome apprehensions for my safety. Stokes*

* Whitley Stokes, born 1763, was a contemporary of Plunket's in Dublin University, where he early obtained a lay fellowship; he then took out the diploma of doctor of medicine; he succeeded in combining professional labours with academical pursuits, and may be considered as the founder of clinical instruction in Ireland. In public life he made himself

sets off for Ireland to-morrow. I think it would be a public-spirited scheme if he and you and I were to establish a partnership for the communication of every thing curious in the three kingdoms which we at present honour by our residence. We might take in the whole circle of politics, philosophy, and belles lettres, and have them published in two or three neat octavos under the title of "Memoirs of the Triple Alliance," or, if you like it better, "A View of the Present State of Europe, by Three Ingenious Young Gentlemen, intended for the Irish Bar, but whose Modesty does not permit them to reveal their Names." It will be a wholesome fillip to my animal spirits, for I am at present falling into a state very little superior to that of the ungifted vulgar, feeding on the rust of Coke's Reports and talking metaphysics with the curate. N——, 'tis true, enlivens us with a little sentiment occasionally, but what is that compared with the entire days of agreeable nonsense which I have passed at Lambeth? I really feel strong forebodings that I shall at last degenerate into a man of downright common sense. You will probably observe no one could draw such an inference from this epistle; but to know how to descend occasionally, as time and place and person require it, is a quality of which no man of sense should be destitute. I had a few days ago a letter from Burrowes, in which he mentions that he had received 60*l.* since he had been called, exclusive of the House of Lords' business, which is to come on in a few days, and for which he is to receive ten guineas a day. *Courage,*

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remarkable by his efforts to develope the natural resources of the country, and in private life was deeply loved by all who knew him. Wolfe Tone, in his diary, comparing him with some of his other friends, wrote, "In the full sense of the term, I look upon Whitley Stokes as the *very best man* I have ever met."

mon ami! If *Burrowes* can do this, *à fortiori*, (which is the finest argument on earth,) what may we not expect?

W. C. PLUNKET.

DEAR KNOX, *Ham Common, August 27*, 1785.

. . . . I hope you are not as dull at Paris as I am at Ham Common. I do nothing but walk, and read, and eat, and sleep, &c. None of our plans of eloquence have been carried into execution. Neither C—— nor N—— seem inclined to it, and I have no appetite for an argument with myself. I once or twice, indeed, assailed the trees in Richmond Park, and though I did not expect the success of Orpheus (he was an ancient orator, who made trees dance after him), was so much disappointed in my solitary exertions that I very soon desisted; a man, you know, can take no pleasure in throwing out elegant personalities against himself, and besides, to own the truth to you in confidence, I always found my first arguments so unanswerable that I never could produce a reply. My only resource is to practise shooting at a mark, and if I succeed in that, and cultivate whist assiduously during the ensuing winter, I hope, notwithstanding my failures in oratory, to be tolerably qualified for the circuit. Neither do I advance in the materials for our intended publication. After a laborious examination of the natives of this part of the country, I have been able to collect little else toward a sketch of their natural history than that the highest orders of people seem to have a very unaccountable dread of strangers, however elegant in their appearance, and that the lower class, such as butchers, bakers, etc., are strongly attached to ready money. You know me, my manners, my person, dress, and so forth, and yet, I assure you

not a gentleman, or *even lady*, in the neighbourhood, has invited me to their house, or so much as saluted me when they met me; nay, some fellows t'other evening had the impudence to pretend to take me for a barber; they absolutely accosted your friend Plunket as a shaver of beards. Send me some explanation of these phenomena. Chief Baron Yelverton has been in town lately, and tells me he thinks it by no means advisable to go into a special pleader's office. Everything requisite for the practical part of the profession, he says, may very easily be picked up without, and he thinks the time would be much better employed in studying its general principles. I asked him had he heard Burrowes; he said he had, two or three times, and was greatly pleased with him; that he spoke like a man of *knowledge and experience in his profession*, and that there could be no doubt of his getting quickly into business. It certainly is a great proof of Burrowes's strong abilities that he was able to persuade the court into an opinion of his legal information. I encouraged the notion, and told Yelverton that he had been one of the most studious men in England during his residence here. You have no doubt heard that the commercial regulations were rejected in Ireland, or I should say, withdrawn. Curran and Fitzgibbon fought,*

* John Philpot Curran. He fought with Fitzgibbon, afterwards Lord Clare, who was at the time Attorney-General for Ireland. Curran also challenged Mr. Hobart, the Chief Secretary. Duelling was very common at this time amongst the members of the Irish Bar. Scott (afterwards Lord Clonmell and Chief Justice of the King's Bench) fought Lord Tyrawley, the Earl of Llandaff, and several others. Metge, a Baron of the Exchequer, fought three duels, one with his own brother-in-law. John Toler (afterwards Lord Norbury and Chief Justice of the Common Pleas) fought with "fighting Fitzgerald." Doyle, a Master in Chancery, fought with John Hely Hutchinson, Provost of Trinity College, Dublin; and the Hon. Patrick Duigenan, also a fellow and tutor of the Irish University, fought three

but unluckily they missed each other. I am told that Grattan's exertions on this occasion have at least been equal to any of his former ones.

Yours very affectionately,

W. C. P.

A Monsieur,

Monsieur Knox, chez M. de la Buire,

Rue des Tosses, St. Jacques, Paris.

The reader will probably find in these letters, light and playful as they are, a grave irony running through the current of humour, even when it is broadest, and this he will afterwards trace as one of the most distinguishing features of the writer's mind.

In May, 1786, Plunket returned to Dublin and was called to the Bar in Hilary term of the following year. He seems to have been at first much surprised at the habits of the Irish lawyers as compared with those of their more steady brethren of the English Bar. He wrote again to his friend Knox shortly after his arrival in Dublin.

Jervis Street, Dublin.

MY DEAR KNOX, *May* 23, 1786.

. . . . I have not been able to read a word since I came home, and, indeed, it is almost impossible for any man who shares in the dissipation that prevails

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duels. Egan, chairman of the county Dublin quarter sessions, fought the Master of the Rolls at Donnybrook, and with Jerry Keller at the Waterford assizes, on a point of law. Henry Grattan fought with Lord Earlsfort and with the Hon. Isaac Corry.

amongst the legal men here to do so. The taste for idleness and debauchery which pervades the whole profession would, in my opinion, alone be sufficient to account for the difference between the legal information of the two countries. I have for my part been obliged to make a serious resolution against supping out and sitting up late, for besides the time actually lost in it, it leaves me in a state of entire stupefaction the entire next day. I have a course of hard reading and early rising in view, which, whatever malicious sneerers may think, I am in great hopes I shall be able to keep up to. . . .

Yours very sincerely,

W. C. P.

Like Erskine, Plunket had to make his first effort in court under the disadvantage of coming to the discussion of the subject when it had almost been exhausted by leading counsel on the same side. In a letter to Mr. Knox, dated June, 1787, he writes, "I made my first public exhibition about a fortnight ago in the Court of Exchequer, and gained a good deal of credit by it. I spoke after three on the same side had spoken before me, but was lucky enough to have the scheme of my argument and most of the parts of it left untouched. R—— was present, and congratulated me very warmly. I have some prospect of being employed next winter in a business of some consequence before the Lords, in which I am to be the sole counsel; there will not probably be

much opportunity for exertion, but the circumstance of appearing to have so much confidence placed in me will be of some service to me, and the business itself will produce thirty or forty guineas. On the whole, I find myself likely to get business much faster than I had any right to expect." I cannot pass away from this correspondence without quoting the following passage illustrating the character of the unfortunate Thomas Addis Emmett, who had been, as I have already mentioned, one of Plunket's college set.

MY DEAR KNOX, *October* 26, 1787.

. . . . Emmett's character is a complete riddle; such a strange compound of man and boy; so ready to admit all others to be what they are, and yet so anxious himself to be what he cannot. Who would think that a spark of Cicero's fire could exist in a composition which has so much of N——'s mind in it? I imagine the "scintillator" knows both himself and the world better than Emmett does. N—— endeavours to appear what he knows he is not; Emmett labours to be what in many cases nature ordains he shall not. The consequence is that Emmett's vanity is unaffected, and his error claims your pity. N——'s, on the contrary, is unnatural and disgusting, and your resentment is excited by the wilfulness of the fraud which he attempts to practise on you. The task of a reformer is a very delicate one, but I think you might work a great change on our friend the doctor. His temper is so excellent that a little address might do a great deal without

danger of offence; and you are by no means a bungler at the probe. I remember I used to wince a little, but it was only during the operation, and nothing like a fester remained. After my vinegar you need not be afraid of Emmett's honey. N—— was treacle labouring to boil, but always subsiding after an ineffectual bubble or two; there was no danger of burning one's fingers, but the chance of dirtying them was too great a price for the cookery, so you prudently gave him up.

A Monsieur,
Monsieur Knox,
Poste Restante, en Italie.

CHAPTER II.

PROGRESS AT THE BAR—PROVOST HUTCHINSON—THE UNIVERSITY ELECTION OF 1790—MARRIAGE—ENTERS IRISH PARLIAMENT—WOLFE TONE—THE "PRESS" NEWSPAPER—LORD MOIRA—SPEECH ON THE STATE OF IRELAND—DENOUNCES THE REBELS.

PLUNKET'S progress at his profession was rapid and steady; even before his call to the bar great expectations of his success were founded upon his distinguished career in the university, and particularly upon his extraordinary reputation as a speaker, earned in the Historical Society. He was therefore very early offered opportunities of proving his powers; and having honestly and accurately mastered the rudiments of the law when a student, he found himself always able to turn such chances to the best advantage. A record of the law arguments and speeches to juries, by which Plunket's fame was built up nearly a hundred years ago, would not, I think, now afford an attractive study, even if reports of these efforts were forthcoming; but there was one singular trial in which he bore a part so distin-

guished in those days of his early ambition, that I shall endeavour to recall it. It has besides a peculiar interest in connection with the University of Dublin.

The celebrated Provost Hutchinson had in 1776 put forward his eldest son as a Member for the University, and had succeeded in securing his return; but he was unseated upon petition, on the ground of his father having improperly influenced the election. In 1790 Sir L. Parsons and Dr. Browne were the sitting members, but the Provost determined to start his second son in opposition to Sir Laurence (his eldest son having, meantime, been created Lord Donoughmore). Mr. Hutchinson was returned by a narrow majority; a petition was presented early the next year, and a committee of the House of Commons sat through a great part of the months of February and March (1791) to hear it. Amongst the members who formed that committee were two young men, then of equal promise, but whose fates were very different—Arthur Wesley, afterwards Duke of Wellington, and the unfortunate Lord Edward Fitzgerald. Peter Burrowes and Plunket, as counsel for the petitioners, took the most prominent parts in this remarkable investigation. Plunket had then been but four years at his profession, but his speech, which is able and lawyer-like, and which lasted for

two days, was listened to by the committee with profound attention, and his cross-examination of the principal witnesses for the Provost (most of whom fell to his lot) was very acute and successful.

Sir Laurence Parsons' impeachment of the return of Hutchinson was founded chiefly upon the improper influences which were said to have been brought to bear by the Provost on two of the voters—two no less remarkable men than Mr. Magee and Dr. Miller. As to Magee, it was alleged that, being anxious to change his vocation as fellow of college for that of a barrister, he had applied to the Provost for leave to obtain the necessary dispensation while keeping his law-terms in London. This permission the Provost, having taken time to consider, refused, as he said, from a sense of duty. But shortly before the election took place Magee was visited by a Captain Cunningham, who, on behalf of Lord Donoughmore, offered to obtain the necessary dispensation, and some additional advantages, if Magee would not vote for Parsons. This offer Magee indignantly refused. Captain Cunningham at first swore before the committee that he had no authority from Lord Donoughmore to make the overture, and had done so merely as the mutual friend of his lordship and of Magee, having heard, as he said, that the latter was about to become

his brother-in-law; but at the end of his examination his testimony was entirely broken down. Plunket, in his speech on this part of the case, said :—

Mr. Magee, in obtaining his fellowship, had applied to the Provost for liberty to solicit a dispensation in order to pursue the profession of a barrister. The Provost required time to consider of it, and after mature deliberation refused it, assigning as a reason that his *sense of duty* prevented him from granting it. Mr. Magee acquiesced, and thought of it no more; but about three weeks before the election an offer was sent to him from Lord Donoughmore of obtaining the very permission which before had been refused, and the allowance of a lay fellow and other pecuniary advantages to the amount of about 100*l.* per annum, on the express condition of not voting for Mr. Parsons, to whom he had solemnly promised his support. The offer was instantly rejected. Lord Donoughmore applauded the spirit of the young man, but resolved, by withholding the privilege, to leave him to the full exercise and praise of his disinterestedness. The testimony of Mr. Cunningham was very curious indeed. That without any previous intimacy, or consultation with Magee, but merely on a vulgar report of his being likely to become connected with him, he should have applied to Lord Donoughmore to bestow favours of such consequence, seemed a matter difficult to be believed; that Lord Donoughmore would have complied with such a request merely out of friendship to Cunningham was still more extraordinary. The permission which had been refused *from a sense of duty*, and that too, on mature deliberation, to be granted at once,

with the addition of 100*l.* per annum, merely because the party had become the reputed intended relation of Captain Cunningham, the friend of Lord Donoughmore, was wonderful indeed! But in the conclusion of this gentleman's testimony his whole romance of love and friendship sank into plain matter of fact, and he confessed himself apprehensive of a penal statute! Why? There was none against love to one's supposed relations —none against being the friend of Lord Donoughmore; but there was danger in carrying on a negotiation to bribe a voter to absent himself. What, then, is the true history of this transaction? The privilege of pursuing the profession which his propensities and his talents fitted him to adorn was refused to Magee—*refused from a sense of duty*, and afterwards offered from a sense of convenience; refused to his distinguished talents—refused to his justified ambition, and offered to his venality—offered as the purchase of base compliance, such as the liberal mind of Lord Donoughmore applauded him for rejecting; the desertion of honour solemnly plighted, the sale of feeling and character and virtue for a bribe, were the only qualities that could make him an object worthy of admission into a liberal and honourable profession!

The charge brought against the Provost by Dr. Miller was even a grosser violation of honesty. Dr. Miller had twice sat for fellowship unsuccessfully. On the second occasion, when defeated by Magee, his answering was so good that some thought the senior fellows, in co-opting his rival, had been influenced by personal feelings.

When Miller was about to make a third attempt in 1789, a Mr. Adair, who was tutor in the Provost's family, and had in college the reputation of being their authorised canvassing agent, came to Miller in the midst of his studies and his anxiety, and not only offered him the utmost exertion of the influence of the Provost in favour of his election, but actually promised him a copy beforehand of the questions which were to be proposed by the Provost as examiner of the fellowship candidates in the course of morality! Burrowes took the lead in this part of the case. His speech on this occasion is a fair specimen of his style, and is peculiarly racy of the Irish forum of that day. I quote a few interesting passages :—

I shall mention but one example more of undue influence, exerted, I admit, without effect; and I feel myself proud of the nature I partake of when I consider that it was ineffectual. The case of Miller exhibits, perhaps, the strongest example of contrasted cunning and wisdom, meanness and dignity, baseness and heroism, that ever occurred during a vain attempt to soften and seduce inflexible integrity. The case of Miller has alternately shocked and delighted every man who heard it. Every man who loves the University—who thinks learning, religion, or virtue ought to be cultivated in the land—must be filled with indignation at the attempt which had been made. What! Is the candidate for holy orders—is the candidate for the highest literary honours in the nation—is the man who aspires to the

dignity of being elected by the most reverent and revered body of men in the land to discharge the delicate and arduous functions of forming the minds and the principles of the youth of the land, to entitle himself to this dignity by a base compliance with a base overture? The enormity of this transaction is admitted; but it seems it has been resolved in council on the other side to deny its reality. The Provost of the University, a wise and learned man, even if he were base enough, could not be so silly as to hazard his situation by such a proposal, and leave himself at the mercy of Adair or Miller to betray him. To discredit Miller would be a vain attempt. But Adair, the confidential and family friend of the Provost, this man whom you have seen so deeply immired in every dirty negotiation, has contracted a foulness of character which may now be turned to account: the whole impurity must be cast upon him. The offer must have been made to Miller, since he swore it; but Adair was unauthorised. The infamous man dared to use the Provost's name without his authority. The Provost is a classical man, and he recollects that Scipio, when accused of embezzlement in office, burned his accounts, that he might not be driven to the meanness of proving his innocence by vulgar arithmetic. This sacrifice of Adair will, I trust, little benefit the cause. The Provost could not calculate upon so extraordinary an event as Miller's rejecting the offer. He has had much intercourse with the world; he has been much in courts, and much in senates; yet it is not extravagant to say he never had intercourse with so honest a man as Miller. Under his circumstances, to repel the offer may be considered a moral miracle. Consider the circumstances. To obtain a fellowship, a man of the brightest and quickest intellect must devote four or five of the most

precious years of his life to abstruse, literary, and joyless study. The pleasures of youth, the pleasures of friendship, must be renounced. During the last few months of this painful preparation the student must totally withdraw himself from his friends, from his family, from his affections. The strongest constitution suffers a temporary injury, the most vivid spirits are deadened, by this private incessant unanimating exertion: many a student has died in the pursuit. The object, too, is proportionably important. Its difficulty prevents any man of independent fortune from embarking in it; and consequently success makes the difference between poverty and affluence, obscurity and fame. The family of the student, too, participate in and augment his anxiety; and he often looks upon success as his only means of giving relief to an indigent parent or an unprotected sister. Miller had been twice unsuccessful—no man ever succeeded in a fourth attempt,—so that a few days was to have decided whether he was to be the happiest of men or the broken-hearted victim of a vain pursuit. The unfair advantage offered him (an offer which would have made a docile parrot superior to Sir Isaac Newton,) was represented as the necessary means of obtaining a justifiable end; and the terms required was an act of all others the most disagreeable to men who, he was taught to believe, were illiberal adversaries. Let the man of the proudest virtue amongst you ask himself, was his refusal to be expected? Let the most cautious ask, what was the apparent hazard that such a proposal would be rejected and exposed? Let the seducer enjoy every benefit of the inference which can be drawn by cunning and profligacy; but let not the virtue of one man be reasoned from, in exculpation of another of a very different

stamp; nor let it be deemed incredible folly in a veteran politician that he did not expect to meet miraculous integrity. You have seen the student on the eve of this third experiment for fellowship, while his mind was fainting under the severity of prolonged and reiterated study, and ease, honour and competency were floating before him:—at this moment of mental and bodily anguish, you have seen his principles assailed by an offer of what he was dying to enjoy; and if the corrupt logic of the age shall not persuade you that such heroic self-denial is incredible, you have seen such sordid overtures nobly spurned, and the short path to infamous prosperity deserted with scorn.

Mr. Burrowes' speech concluded the arguments. When the committee, which had originally consisted of fourteen, came to make their final decision, it was found that one of the members was unable to attend: of the remaining thirteen, seven were for unseating Mr. Hutchinson, six the other way. Amongst the majority were Wesley and Lord Edward Fitzgerald; but the chairman of the committee was in the minority, and by the curious provision of an Act of Parliament, he was empowered to vote in the place of the absent member, and the numbers being thus equalized, he gave his casting vote in favour of the Provost. Thus he virtually enjoyed three votes! It is but fair to Provost Hutchinson to state that at a college visitation which soon after occurred, when Miller rose publicly to denounce Adair for the

conduct above detailed, the Provost solemnly denied that he had ever authorised the offers made by Adair, and condemned his conduct in the strongest terms; and it is at least certain that though the Hutchinson family long afterwards enjoyed large patronage, Adair was quite unvisited by their favours. At the time, however, the Provost reaped little popularity from this celebrated trial and the petitioner a great deal; while his counsel, and especially young Plunket, covered themselves with fame.

The North-west circuit, which passed through his native town of Fermanagh, was naturally chosen by Mr. Plunket as that upon which he had the best prospect of obtaining business; and it had for him an additional charm, for it often brought him into the neighbourhood of Strabane, where Mr. John McCausland resided. This gentleman then represented the county of Donegal in the Irish House of Commons, and his family had also for many years, and with varying success, contested the county of Tyrone and the borough of Strabane against the powerful interest of the Hamiltons. Mr. John McCausland's eldest son having lately married Plunket's first cousin, Miss Hannah Conyngham, an intimacy between their families had been formed, and William Plunket became deeply attached to Miss Catherine McCausland,

his cousin's sister-in-law. They were engaged, and, in 1791, when Plunket, then in his twenty-eighth year, had secured some independence and position at his profession, they were allowed to marry. For thirty-two years of wedded life Mr. Plunket proved to this lady all that tender and intense affection which was so marked a feature of his stern and masculine character. A family of five daughters (one of whom died young) and six sons sprung from their union.

During the eleven years that elapsed between his call to the bar in 1787 and his entering the Irish House of Commons in 1798, Plunket seems to have kept quite aloof from the busy politics which then distracted every grade of Irish society. On the one hand, he was not connected by family ties with any of the great houses, whose members formed the ruling class in Ireland, and all his feelings and opinions were opposed to their narrow and corrupt system of government; while on the other hand he was utterly hostile to the extreme section of the Liberal party, which was then hurrying the country into rebellion. He did not hesitate to sever his intimacy with Thomas Addis Emmett, which had existed since the days when they were at school together. As firmly, but more regretfully, he broke off his friendship with Wolfe Tone, for whom he never ceased to

feel a great kindness. Between these two young men there was an intimacy peculiarly affectionate. Friendship in their case must have sprung, as it often does, from a startling opposition in almost every point in their characters. The genius of Wolfe Tone was accompanied by its full share of eccentricity. His mind, powerful and impulsive, rushed at its object without looking to consequences, and when foiled in one direction charged with double energy in another. So too his feelings, though strong and rapid, were not deep, and his spirits were seldom in the same state for any length of time: now playful and buoyant, the next moment melancholy and depressed. Plunket's mind, on the other hand, was grave and weighty; his energies were concentrated. He could seize the point of any question with the rapidity of genius, but he seldom opened his lips to speak until his mind had fastened upon his subject with the grasp of a vice. His feelings, which were genuine and intense, ran in a deep strong volume, that showed, ordinarily, scarce a ripple on the surface, until, meeting with an obstacle to their course, they burst over it with irresistible violence. Both men were honest, courageous, and self-relying, and they mutually respected each other.

The following passage occurs in Tone's Diary, written in the year 1792, when he was busy in

Ireland organizing a committee whose first object it was to obtain a measure of legislative relief for the Roman Catholics, but whose members were prepared to attempt more radical changes in the existing system, if an opportunity should offer itself. At this time Tone always wrote of himself under the name of Hutton.

9th November, at Court.—Wonderful to see the rapid change in the minds of the bar on the Catholic question —almost everybody favourable. Some for an immediate abolition of all penal laws: certainly the most magnanimous mode and the wisest. All sorts of men, and especially lawyer Plunket, take a pleasure in girding at Mr. Hutton, "*who takes at once all their seven points in his buckler, thus.*" Exceeding good laughing. Mr. Hutton called Marat. Sundry barristers apply to him for protection in the approaching rebellion. Lawyer Plunket applies for Carton,* which Mr. Hutton refuses, inasmuch as the Duke of Leinster is his friend, but offers him Curraghmore, the seat of the Marquis of Waterford. This Mr. Hutton does to have a rise out of Marcus Beresford, who is at his elbow listening. Great laughter thereat. The committee charged with causing the non-consumption agreement against Bellingham beer. Mr. Hutton, at the risque of his life, asserts the said charge to be a falsehood. Valiant! All declare their satisfaction thereat. Everything looks as well as possible. Huzza! Dine at home with Whitley Stokes, and . . . Very pleasant and sober.†

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* The country seat of the Duke of Leinster, situated near Dublin.

† *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, edited by his son, vol. i. p. 198.

At this time Tone and Plunket seem to have been still upon terms of friendship, but as events went on, and Tone took up a more decidedly and openly rebellious position, all intercourse between them ceased, nor was it renewed until Tone's departure for America gave Plunket an opportunity of expressing his unabated frendship.

DEAR TONE, *May* 29, 1795.

I EMBRACE with great pleasure the idea and opportunity of renewing our old habits of intimacy and friendship. Long as they have been interrupted, I can assure you that no hostile sentiment towards you ever found admittance into my mind. Regret, allow me the expression, on your account, apprehension for the public, and great pain at being deprived of the social, happy and unrestrained intercourse which had for so many years subsisted between us, were the sum of my feelings. Some of them perhaps were mistaken, but there can be no use now in any retrospect of that kind. It is not without a degree of melancholy I reflect that your present destination makes it probable that we may never meet again, and talk and laugh together, as we used to do, though it is difficult to determine whether these jumbling times might not bring us together. In all events, I shall be most happy to hear from you, and write to you often and fully, and to hear of your well-being, wherever you may be. If I had known your departure was to have been so very immediate, I would not have suffered you to slip away without a personal meeting. I shall hope to hear from you as soon as you get to America. I formerly had friends there. The unfortunate death of my brother you have probably

heard of: perhaps, however, I may still have some there who might be useful to you. Let me know where and in what line you think of settling; and if any of my connexions can be of use, I will write to them warmly. I beg you will give my best regards to Mrs. Tone, and believe me, dear Tone, with great truth, your friend,

W. PLUNKET.*

I have not been able to find any reply to this letter on the part of Tone; but there are throughout his subsequent diaries many expressions of kindly feeling for his old associates, from whom differences on politics had forcibly separated him. He writes in Paris (where he was arranging a French invasion of Ireland with his friend "Citizen Carnot, the Organizer of Victories" as he was called), on February 25th, 1796 :—

I am a pretty fellow to negotiate with the Directory of France, pull down a monarchy and establish a republic, to break a connection of 600 years' standing, and contract a fresh alliance with another country. "*By'r Lakins, a parlous fear.*" What would my old friend Fitzgibbon† say if he was to read those wise memorandums? "He called me dog before he had a cause;" I remember that he used to say that I was a viper in the bosom of Ireland. Now that I am in Paris I will venture to say that he lies, and that I am a better Irishman than he and his whole gang of rascals, as well as the gang who are opposing him *as it were.* But this

* *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, by his son, vol. i. Appendix, pp. 281-2.
† Lord Clare, then Chancellor of Ireland.

is all castle-building. Let me finish my memorial, and deliver it to the Minister. Nothing but *Ministers and Directoires Executif* (*sic*), *and revolutionary memorials.* Well, my friend Plunket (but I sincerely forgive him), and my friend Magee, whom I have not yet forgiven, would not speak to me in Ireland, because I was a republican. Sink or swim, I stand to-day on as high ground as either of them.*

Only once at this period did Plunket's

* Vol. ii. pp. 29, 30. Again, writing in July of the same year, when he had begun to weary of his unsuccessful efforts to induce the French Directory to hasten their threatened descent upon the shores of Ireland, and when he began to feel lonely and dispirited :—"To-day I scaled Mont Martre all alone, and had a magnificent view of Paris under my feet ; but it is terrible to have nobody to speak to, or to communicate the million of observations which '*rise, shine, evaporate, and fall*' in my mind. Money ! money ! money ! I declare for my part I believe it is gone clean under the ground.' I have this day six crowns in silver, being '*of dissipate wealth the small remains.*' Sad ! sad ! I hope citizen Carnot may '*bid his treasurer disburse six pounds to pay my debts,*' otherwise the consequences, I fear, will be truly alarming. In the evening I lounged all alone, as usual, to the Champs Elysées, and drank coffee by myself. It is dismal, this solitude. For society I might as well be in Arabia Deserta not Arabia Felix. Well, as Kite says, *it is all for the good of the service.* If I have not passed almost six tedious months in France ! I wonder at it. I am sure my country is much my debtor, if not for what I have done, at least for what I have suffered on account of her liberty. Well, I do not grudge it to her, and if ever she is able, she will reward me, and I think by that time I will have deserved it at her hands. To-morrow I will go see Clarke and hear what he has to say for himself. He assures me, for I asked him a second time, for greater certainty, that my friends in Ireland know I am here. I am heartily glad of it. I was dreaming all last night of Plunket and Peter Burrowes and George Knox, and I believe it is that which has thrown me into the blue devils all this day. I remember Swift makes the remark as to dreams, that their complexion influences our temper the whole day after, and I believe he is right. Perhaps the marvellous state of my finances may a little contribute to plunge me into a state of tender melancholy. For Shenstone says there is a close connection between the animal spirits and the breeches-pocket. Aristotle has many fine things on that subject. O Lord ! O Lord ! these are but sickly jokes. It won't do."—*Ib.* pp. 150, 151.

professional employments bring him prominently before the public, when he was employed as counsel to defend Henry Sheares, who was, with his brother, tried for high treason on the 4th of July, 1798. On this occasion Mr. Plunket was associated with Curran, who appeared for the elder brother; and as the latter had undertaken to speak to the facts of the case, Mr. Plunket's address was principally confined to a law argument on a question of evidence, of which but a meagre report has been preserved.*

I shall find an occasion hereafter to recall Plunket's manner and style as an advocate; and for the present need only say that in 1797 he received his silk gown from Lord Clare, and from that time forward practised principally in the Courts of Equity. We now pass to his political career in the Irish House of Commons.

It was by the influence of the Earl of Charlemont,† illustrious as the patriot general of the Volunteers in 1783, that Mr. Plunket was returned to Parliament. In January, 1798, Lord Caulfeild, the Earl's eldest son, was elected Member for the county of Armagh, and one

* For the details of this most melancholy case the reader is referred to Howell's *State Trials for the Year* 1798.

† James, 4th Viscount Charlemont, born 18th August, 1728, created Earl of Charlemont 23rd December, 1763, commanded the Irish Volunteers in 1783, died August 4th, 1799.

of the seats for the family pocket-borough of Charlemont which he had previously filled became vacant. Mr. Plunket was not then personally known to Lord Charlemont, and the circumstances of their first meeting were equally honourable to both the patron and his client. They were told me by the late Lord Charlemont * (the great earl's son) shortly before his death, but at a time when his powerful memory reproduced distinctly every particular of events which had occurred more than sixty years before.

The Earl of Charlemont had more than once already availed himself of his privilege of conferring a seat in the House of Commons on whom he pleased, in favour of some young man of promise, unconnected with his own family, but whom he thought likely to prove a faithful and effectual servant of his country. Thus Grattan had been returned for Charlemont borough in the memorable year 1782. In the beginning of 1798, as I have already mentioned, a vacancy having occurred, his lordship caused a communication to be made to Mr. Plunket, in consequence of which the latter called at Charlemont House on the morning after he received the message, and was closeted with his lordship until late in the

* Francis William, 2nd Earl of Charlemont, born January 3rd, 1775, died in 1861.

afternoon. When their conference ended, Mr. Plunket expressed his regret that while holding the same political views as his lordship on almost every topic, on one subject they were not of one mind, and that he must therefore decline becoming his lordship's nominee, lest he should be obliged to act against his wishes at some future conjuncture. Lord Charlemont, however, intimated that perhaps that difficulty might be got over, and asked Mr. Plunket to pay him another visit. He did so, and at the end of this second interview it was agreed that Plunket should enter Parliament as Member for the borough of Charlemont, unfettered by any obligations or pledge whatever, though he had the pleasure of knowing that on every point save one he entirely concurred with his illustrious patron. What that one point was there can now be no doubt. Lord Charlemont, though in every other respect the fearless champion of the liberties of the people as well as of the independence of Ireland, entertained very strong prejudices against granting large political concessions to the Roman Catholics, and throughout the greater part of his life actively opposed their claims. But in his last years he greatly modified his views on this subject, and on one occasion, in the year 1799, after a long interview with Plunket, he exclaimed, on meeting his son,—"Plunket has

prevailed over an old prejudice." * In that year the old lord died, broken-hearted at the degradation of the Parliament with which he associated so much of glorious and happy memories, and the annihilation of the independence for whose achievement a national army had once assembled under his command; but we may fairly infer that Lord Charlemont was one of the earliest and noblest of Plunket's many proselytes on this question.

However Mr. Plunket and Lord Charlemont may at first have differed as to the emancipation of the Roman Catholics, they were entirely agreed upon the duty and necessity of opposing and

* The reader will find a curious confirmation of this anecdote in the following extract from a letter written by Mr. Plunket to Mr. Hardy, the editor of *Lord Charlemont's Life;* it was written in 1812, on the occasion of a second edition of that work being prepared for the press, and will be found at p. 429 of the 2nd volume of the *Memoirs of the Earl of Charlemont*, by Francis Hardy, 2nd edition. "I observe that in p. 419 of your work you mention that Lord Charlemont never altogether abandoned the opinions which he had originally entertained in opposition to the claims of the Roman Catholics. So much reverence is attached to every opinion which he entertained on the affairs of Ireland, that I feel it a duty to communicate to you the following circumstance, of which you may make whatever use you think proper. In the year 1798 or 1799 I had a conversation with his lordship, of which the topics of the Catholic claims and parliamentary reform formed a part. He said that to these two questions he had made two sacrifices, to the latter a borough, and to the former (which he said he considered as a more meritorious effort) a prejudice. His lordship then went on to state some of the grounds on which originally he had been adverse to the immediate admission of Roman Catholics to the privileges of the Constitution, and also some of the reasonings which had latterly induced a change of his sentiments on this subject. Of these I have not any such precise recollections as would warrant me in an attempt to detail them; but the preliminary observation was so marked and epigrammatic that I can pledge myself for its authenticity."

thwarting by every constitutional means the system by which the English Government were preparing the Irish Parliament and people for the Union. To this object Mr. Plunket devoted himself heart and soul. Nor is it difficult to find an abundance of reasons both public and private that must have actuated him in doing so.

No one who studies in a spirit of fairness the history of Ireland during the years that immediately preceded the Union, can fail to see how odious must have been the aspect in which the Government of that day presented itself to every Irishman of liberal sympathies. The names of Cornwallis and Castlereagh will always be honoured in the history of Great Britain for the many important services they rendered their country, and yet it is true that when the former was Lord Lieutenant and the latter Chief Secretary of Ireland, a system of corruption was perfected in Parliament, and a reign of terror was kept up throughout the country, the narrative of which after a lapse of near seventy years still makes the Irishman feel shame and resentment and fills the mind of the Englishman with wonder and perhaps with pity. When these two noblemen undertook their task, they found themselves committed to a certain line of conduct in governing the country, to which it was necessary they should

adhere until the great measure of Union should abolish this system and with it the circumstances which made it unavoidable. A moment's consideration will make this plain. That measure could be carried only by the assistance of those persons who commanded the votes of the majority of the House of Commons, and, in fact, was not carried until every one of them was satisfied in one way or another. The members of this party were therefore called and treated as if they were the friends of Government. Their notion of ruling Ireland had come down to them from evil times, and in it the bitterness of a hatred at once hereditary and religious, was added to a feeling of profound distrust in the loyalty of the masses of their fellow-countrymen. Accordingly, so soon as the organization of United Irishmen began to assume an aspect of physical resistance, the Government at once adopted the established precedent of making one section of the people the executioners of the law against the rest.

Imagination may depict, but can scarcely colour too highly, the scenes of violence and oppression that followed. With the regular troops were associated bands of yeomanry, whose passions were stimulated by ancient political hatred and encouraged by a religious animosity

that was nearly fanatic: many considerations may doubtless be suggested to palliate, though they cannot excuse these feelings. There were maddening traditions of what the conduct of their enemies had been in former times whenever they had obtained the upper hand. There was the maddening terror of what they would do if ever they gained the upper hand again: an apprehension fully justified by the result. Indeed in this respect the only difference between the cruelties practised by the loyalists and rebels, was that the former were not so wholesale in their butchery of men, and the latter were not so brutal in their outrages upon women.

It was the misfortune of the English Government at this time that while they saw one party goading the other into rebellion, and that other preparing to rebel with terrible earnestness, it was not in their power to interfere; for this was an old established principle of government in Ireland that had come down from the days of Cromwell, and of the soldiers of William. To baulk the loyalist of the revenge in which by anticipation as well as retrospectively he indulged, would have been to smite heavily upon his allegiance; for hatred of the Papist was an hereditary principle as much a part of his nature as attachment to the House of Hanover. When Lord

Cornwallis assumed the reins of Government, the rebellion had actually broken out; and it is most agreeable to trace amidst so much ferocity and cruelty, the honest, though often ineffectual efforts that were made by this upright and humane nobleman, towards mitigating the fury of a party, to adopt and defend whose acts was with him a political necessity. But this view of the Lord Lieutenant's conduct has only lately been brought to light. To the liberal Irishman of that day his government appeared to be identified with the spirit of those whose participation in it was its disgrace.*

Within the walls of Parliament, the policy of the Government had already produced effects, not only irritating on public grounds, but which must in Plunket's case have powerfully roused

* Lord Cornwallis writes of the state of the country in the autumn of '98:—"But all is trifling compared to the numberless murders that are hourly committed by our people without any process or examination whatever. The yeomanry are in the style of the Loyalists in America, only much more numerous and powerful, and a thousand times more ferocious. They have served their country, but they now take the lead in rapine and murder. The Irish militia, with few officers, and those chiefly of the worst kind, follow closely on the heels of the yeomanry in murder and every kind of atrocity; and the fencibles take a share, though much behindhand, with the others. . . . The conversation of the principal persons of the country all tend to encourage this system of blood; and the conversation, even at my table, where you will suppose I do all that I can to prevent it, always turns on hanging, shooting, &c. And if a priest has been put to death, the greatest joy is expressed by the whole company. So much for Ireland and my wretched situation."—*Marquis Cornwallis to* ——, vol. ii. p. 371.

his personal feelings. Sixteen years before, he had as a college lad looked down from the gallery of the House of Commons with delight and envy upon the opposition benches where the patriotic party had so long sat; he had listened to the eloquent words of national triumph and hope in which Grattan told the Irish people that their independence was achieved. In those days that party had enjoyed the full confidence of the nation. There was still much to be reformed in the representation — many concessions to be obtained for the Catholics—many abuses to be swept away in order to consolidate the strength of the new system. But the English Government had not then raised any open opposition to these measures, and to obtain them constitutionally seemed to be the natural object and destiny of the party with whom Plunket's sympathies all went.

At that time he was scarcely twenty years old; his opinions were being formed, and his ambition was taking shape. It is not difficult to imagine how such scenes must have fired his imagination; what brilliant hopes and projects he formed. But when the time came for him to take his seat in Parliament he found it wholly changed. The English Government had nearly abandoned the sham of treating the Irish Par-

liament as an independent legislature; the Treasury benches were filled with placemen and pensioners. All efforts tending to reform of Parliament or concession to the Catholics had been given up as hopeless. Grattan and some of his immediate followers had seceded from an assembly too degraded to appreciate their motives or to be influenced by their example; and whatever remained of independence in the House of Commons, Ministers still sought to bring under their control. Scarcely thirty votes appeared in opposition upon the most important divisions, while Government could at any time readily whip a majority of 100.* Under the system of repre-

* In 1784, when Pitt was preparing his great plan for creating a unity of interests between the two countries by an equitable adjustment of tariffs, and had at the same time in contemplation a measure of parliamentary reform, he directed the Irish Government to furnish him with particular information as to the constitution of the House of Commons, and the parties and influences by which it was swayed. In accordance with these instructions elaborate tables and digests were prepared, showing not only the exact state of the representation, but containing likewise an account of the political position, character, connections, and private objects of each individual member.

"116 nomination seats were divided amongst some 25 proprietors. Lord Shannon returned no less than 16 members, and the great family of Ponsonby returned 14; Lord Hillsborough had 9 seats, the Duke of Leinster 7. The Castle itself appropriated 12. The whole reliable strength of the Government in the House of Commons amounted to 186 votes. These were distributed into five classes:—

"I. 86 proprietary seats, the owners of which had let them out in consideration of titles, offices, and pensions in possession or expectancy.

"II. 12 seats belonging to the Government.

"III. 44 seats occupied by placemen.

"IV. 32 votes of gentlemen who had promises or who had avowed their expectations of favours and qualifications.

sentation then adopted in Ireland, it would have been impossible in any substantial sense to appeal to the people, and even could this have been done the people would not have responded; gloomy and desperate, they had lost all confidence in their Parliament, and looked to other quarters for deliverance from the intolerable tyranny under which they suffered. There can be no doubt that this anarchy and disgrace was in a great

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"V. Lastly, there were 12 Members not registered in the Secretary's books as demanding either peerages, places, or pensions, and therefore set down as supporting the Government on public grounds.

"Besides these there was a party of 29, who, though willing to cultivate private intercourse with Ministers, affected and sometimes asserted an independent opposition in the House. The regular opposition appears to have been limited to 82. Of these 30 were the nominees of Whig proprietors, and 52 represented the popular party."—MASSEY'S *History of England during the Reign of George III.*, vol. iii. p. 264.

Mr. Massey makes this statement from the Bolton MSS., and adds in a note:—"As a specimen of this curious record, I take a few entries at random:—

"H. H., son-in-law to Lord A., and brought into Parliament by him, studies law and wishes to be commissioner of barracks or in some similar place; would go into orders and take a living.

"H. D., brother to Lord C., applied for office, but as no specific promise could be made, has lately voted in opposition: easy to be had, if thought expedient: a silent, gloomy man.

"L. M., refuses to accept 500*l.* per annum: states very high pretensions from his skill in House of Commons management: expects 1000*l.* per annum. N.B.—Be careful of him.

"T. N., has been in the army and is now on half-pay: wishes a troop of dragoons in full pay: states his pretensions to be fifteen years' service in Parliament. N.B.—Would prefer office to military promotion, but already has and has long had a pension. Especially on the side of truth not favourable.

"R. P., independent, but well disposed to Government: his four sisters have pensions; his object is a living for his brother.

"T. P., brother to Lord L. and brought in by him: a captain in the navy; wishes for some sinecure employment."

degree the result of a misgovernment, ancient and recent, which seemed to have been always adopted with a view to bring out strongly the worst elements of Irish character; but it was at that time said, and no doubt believed, by the opposition that the ministry of the day had deliberately planned and accomplished the disorganization of the Irish people and their Parliament in order to enable them to carry out their favourite project of the Union.* It is true that at this time no whisper of that measure had been breathed by the Government, but it was evident

* A modern lecturer, on this period of Irish history, has the following passage:—"Among the phantoms of hatred and suspicion which arose from this field of carnage, was the horrible idea that the English Government had intentionally stimulated the Irish people into rebellion in order to pave the way for the Union."—GOLDWIN SMITH, *On Irish History and Irish Character*, p. 176. Mr. Goldwin Smith goes on to say (most truly) that "no evidence can be produced in support of this charge." No charge more extravagant could be brought against the policy of such a statesman as we know Mr. Pitt to have been. The truth is that the Irish Rebellion of '98 was the remote consequence of passions bred in the people through ages of misrule, for which Mr. Pitt was no more responsible than he was for the French Revolution (the immediate precedent adopted by the discontented in Ireland). But on the other hand it must be admitted that the party to whom the carrying out of his policy was entrusted in Ireland were guilty of excesses both before and after the beginning of the Rebellion, that no doubt at first precipitated that outbreak and afterwards aggravated its horrors. It must also be remembered that the state of affairs thus created was at once taken advantage of by the Minister to carry his favourite measure. We need not therefore wonder if politicians so fiercely excited as were the Irish patriotic party of that day made some confusion between the consequences and the motives of their opponents' conduct, and accused William Pitt, as they often did, of having deliberately planned the crisis, of which he so promptly availed himself, for the achievement of his great policy.

that their policy was intended to lead to no other end. It is scarcely necessary to point out the private considerations that in Plunket's case must have aggravated his feelings of resentment against the Government. He was placed between the Scylla of ministerial corruption into which some, though very few, of his earlier associates had been swept, and the Charybdis of popular rebellion that had worked the ruin of many of his dearest friends. Should he steer between the two, he found himself involved in a struggle against overwhelming numbers, out-voted on every subject of national importance, without a chance of improvement in his position, and with the phantom of an Union daily taking more substantial shape: a measure which seemed likely to end for ever all chance for him of parliamentary or political honours.

He had, however, the satisfaction of meeting as his associates in this forlorn hope of patriots some of his most intimate and cherished friends. There was Charles Kendal Bushe, speaking as Grattan said of him "with the lips of an angel;" there too was George Knox, representing the University of Dublin, and lending assistance by the weight and amiability of his personal character; and there was Sir Laurence Parsons, always a vehement patriot, who was still suspected of being

prepared to go greater lengths against the Government than other members of the party with whom he acted. Peter Burrowes, not then in Parliament, was soon sent to their assistance.

This brilliant band of young but practised debaters was directed by the trained skill and high character of George Ponsonby,* and was supported by a few independent county Members, and by that party out of Parliament which was represented by Henry Grattan, and contained within its narrow limits all that was most respectable and liberal in the country.

The last Parliament that ever met in Ireland had assembled on the 9th of January, 1798, and Plunket took the oaths and his seat on the 6th of February. The following notice of this event appeared in the *Dublin Evening Post*, which was at the time the organ of the moderate Liberal party :—

Much hope is entertained of the parliamentary exertions of Counsellor Plunket; his character at the bar, for talents as well as legal knowledge, is high, and his political principles are known to be strictly constitutional. It is, however, to be lamented that he

* Second son of the Rt. Hon. John Ponsonby (second son of the first Earl of Bessborough, and Speaker of the Irish House of Commons), born March 4, 1755; an eminent lawyer and statesman, Chancellor of Ireland, 1806, and afterwards leader of the Opposition in the British House of Commons. Died in 1817.

comes into Parliament at a time when the secession of that party which stood in the breach so long, and combated with so much energy, though unhappily with so little success, against the *innovators* of the constitution, leaves little hope that his unsupported efforts can be productive of much effect.*

The first opportunity which presented itself to Mr. Plunket of showing the resolute opposition he meant to give to the ministerial policy was the debate on a proposed bill, "To amend the Act of 23rd & 24th George III., for securing the Liberty of the Press by preventing Abuses arising from the Publication of Traitorous, Seditious, False, and Scandalous Libels by Persons unknown." The object of this measure was to provide for the case of the registered publisher of a newspaper (the only person then liable at law for its contents) leaving the country, so as to avoid the consequences of what might appear in the print. It was more particularly aimed at the *Press* newspaper, which represented the views of the United Irishmen in Dublin. The principal writers were Sampson, Addis Emmett, and perhaps Dr. Drennan, and it was in this print that Tom Moore made his first attempt in prose.†

* *Dublin Evening Post*, February 8th, 1798.

† See a short but very interesting preface written by Moore for the edition of his collected works, and printed at the beginning of the volume of *Irish Melodies*, published by Longman and Co., Paternoster Row, 1852.

Arthur O'Connor was at the time its responsible owner, but he had left the country, as ambassador for the United Irishmen to the French Directory,* while his paper continued to shower abuse on every section of loyal men in Ireland. The party to which Plunket belonged did not escape its lash. But he, conceiving that the provisions of the proposed bill were more sweeping and general than the circumstances demanded, and that they might be used as a part of the general policy of the Government, determined to oppose it The most important section of the Act was one which made it necessary for the publisher of a newspaper to give securities, himself in 1,000*l.*, and two others, "*to be approved of by Ministers*," in a like sum. I quote a few passages from the meagre report that has come down to us, rather as showing the spirit in which Mr. Plunket entered on his crusade against the Government than as specimens of his style :—

Finding from the tendency of every clause in the bill that it goes, not to restrain the licentiousness of the press, but to restrict its liberty, I give my opposition to the whole of it. The bill, I understand, was originally called for by a case which occurred where the printer

* He was arrested in England and tried at Maidstone for high treason. He subpœnaed as witnesses to his character and principles many of his acquaintances, both English and Irish, of the Whig party. They attended and said all they could for him, but seem to have thought it an unpleasant task.—LORD HOLLAND'S *History of the Whigs*.

of a paper was not responsible. So far as any measure goes to provide for that case I will support it. But this bill goes not merely to that point: its great object seems to be to lay such previous restraints on the liberty of publishing as would in my mind utterly abolish that liberty. . . . . .

This bill says no man shall lay any sentiment before the public unless he be worth 2,000*l.* Is not this curtailing the liberty of the press?

For who are the men that are called on to find security for so large a sum? Not certainly a very wealthy class of men, who may be supposed to be able to find it without inconvenience. They are printers; a business not in the very highest degree of repute, probably not so high as it ought to be. They are men who enter into the business of news-printing to make a livelihood, and who generally begin with little or no property, and make a living of it principally by their manual labour. If such men were called on to give security to the amount of 2,000*l.*, they would be compelled to resign the business. Even of men worth that sum, the Minister might refuse the securities at his discretion, while the favourite printer might be suffered to publish without any security at all. Thus the liberty of the press in Ireland would receive a vital wound. Every channel of communication with the great bulk of the people would be shut up, except those which Government might think proper to keep open to blazon their own praise and their own virtues. There would reign throughout the country a deadly silence, except where the venal voice of some hireling print might break in upon it by mutilated and false statements of facts, by misrepresentation of principles, or by base and servile adulation of its masters. . . . The licentiousness of the press has been complained of:

I will tell Government a better remedy against it than this bill affords them. Let them act in such a manner as to be above its obloquy. Let them restore the Constitution. Let them reform the abuses which pollute every department. Let them reform the Parliament. Let them mitigate their system of coercion. Let them conciliate the people. Then may they laugh at the slanders of a licentious press. They will have a better defence against its malice than this unconstitutional measure can afford them. If they want proof of the efficacy of this remedy, I refer them to what has occurred on the case of that unfortunate man, William Orr,* of which so much has been said. The falsest calumnies have been thrown on the judges who presided at that trial. Do the public believe those calumnies? Are the names of Yelverton or Chamberlaine less loved and revered, because they have been thus calumniated? No! The shafts of malice have been blunted by the virtue, the integrity, the humanity of those learned and upright men; so will they ever fall innocuous from the sevenfold shield of public and private virtue! Sir, the Constitution of these countries rests on two great pillars: the liberty of the press and the trial by jury. The imperious necessity of the times (a necessity of which the existence cannot be denied, but into the causes of which this is not the time to inquire,) has

* In October, 1797, William Orr had been hanged at Carrickfergus for administering treasonable oaths: an alleged libel, reflecting on that execution, was published in the *Press* newspaper. Peter Finnerty, who was at the time the publisher, was brought to trial at Dublin. He was defended with much eloquence by Curran, but being found guilty, was sentenced to stand in the pillory for one hour, (Lord E. Fitzgerald and Arthur O'Connor took their places beside him on this occasion,) and to be imprisoned for two years."—STANHOPE'S *Life of Pitt*, vol. iii. pp. 105, 106, and HOWELL'S *State Trials*, vol. xxii. pp. 900–1019.

made it necessary to suspend for a time the trial by jury. If the liberty of the press is also to be given up, in what situation will this country be? What security any longer remains to the people to guard them against the encroachments of power? what vestige of Constitution or liberty? On broad principles I oppose this bill altogether. I decline to go into objections to particular clauses.

Only one or two other speakers supported Plunket's position, but the Government consented to reduce the amount of the security to 500*l.*

The next occasion upon which he addressed the House of Commons was on the 5th day of March, in the debate upon Sir Laurence Parsons' motion for a committee of the whole House, to consider "whence the present discontents in this country arise, and what are the most effectual means of allaying the same."

In March of 1798, the Rebellion, which broke out two months afterwards, heralded its advent by manifest signs and tokens. It was evidently necessary that the Government should show itself firm and fearless, but at the same time humanity should have suggested some measures of conciliation, to save from the consequences of revolt those who otherwise must take part in it, through sheer desperation. Unfortunately, at that time mercy was a quality very little in favour at Dublin Castle; and there were few who, knowing

the injustice and impolicy of this abuse of power, had both courage and opportunity to bring it before the public, with any chance of a hearing. In England one man was found to raise his voice in defence of his unhappy fellow-countrymen. This was Lord Moira. His talents, amiable character, and high favour, made him deservedly popular, and, at the moment, he enjoyed peculiar importance, as it was supposed that he more than any other possessed the confidence of the Prince of Wales. In March and in November (1797) he had brought the state of Ireland before the English House of Lords with great earnestness. He had said—

My lords,—In such a contest as we are engaged in I am astonished that any portion of the kingdom should be suffered to hang like a dead weight upon the rest. . . . . I will not on the present occasion discuss the heartburnings which have reduced Ireland to her present calamitous condition. I may discuss them elsewhere; but in lamenting them I will state that, to my conviction, these discontents arose from a mistaken application of severities. I have myself been a witness in Ireland to cases of the most absurd and of the most disgusting tyranny.

He was answered by Lord Grenville, and outvoted.

On the 19th of February (1798) he renewed the question before the Irish House of Lords in a speech that nobly reflected his own humane and

patriotic mind. Since he had brought the subject under the notice of his brother peers in England, he had been most soundly abused, and charged with a factious and disaffected opposition to the Government. This was his answer :—

> Slander [he said] is like the mephitic vapours of the *Grotto del Cane* at Naples: it suffocates the animal that grovels, *but cannot reach the man who stands upright.*

He then drew a touching picture of the series of cruel disappointments to which the hopes of the Irish had for fifteen years been subjected, and pointed to reform of Parliament and concessions to the Catholics as the political measures that should express to the people a change in the sentiments of the Government of England towards them. In his reply to Lord Clare, he exclaimed :—

> The learned lord asks me whether I do not believe that there exists in this country a dangerous conspiracy against the Government. My lords, I do believe that there exists such a conspiracy; and I attribute the existence of such a conspiracy to the severe and unconstitutional measures which Government has adopted. I attribute much of the disturbance and much of the danger which exists to that most impolitic and lamentable measure, the recall of my Lord Fitzwilliam. I predicted these calamities when I first heard of that measure, and I have been too true a prophet.

Only nine peers voted with Lord Moira on this question in a house of fifty-three.

It was in the same spirit that Sir Laurence Parsons came before the House of Commons, as already mentioned. He said,—

> The distractions of the country are too obvious and too lamentable for me to dwell upon their circumstances: but I call upon the House, by this motion, to inquire into the causes of these distractions, to examine into the demands of the people. It is your duty, as representatives of the people, to conciliate them by concessions of their demands, if they are reasonable, or by convincing them by argument that they are inadmissible—if they are so; this would be to adopt a conduct worthy of your characters as representatives of the people; this would be better than continuing a system of coercion which has failed, or branding a whole people as factiously and irremediably turbulent.

His motion was seconded by Lord Caulfeild in a maiden speech.

It was opposed by Lord Castlereagh. From a review of the last seven years he deduced the position that the United Irishmen were not to be contented or conciliated by any concession; that their object was to establish an independent Irish republic upon French principles and by means of French assistance; that coercive measures against them were the consequences, not the causes, of these designs, and that the excesses of the soldiery were to be expected in such a state of affairs; these excesses he lamented, but he contended that

the existing laws were able to deal with such offences, &c. Twenty-nine speakers followed on the same side, directing against the opposition in very offensive language the charge of sympathy with the rebels. The following newspaper report of Plunket's speech is evidently most insufficient; but the manner in which he takes advantage of Mr. Bagwell's interruption is very adroit and telling:—

It is contrary to my original intention, that I rise to say a few words on this question; nor should I have risen at all, but that it is made incumbent on every man who intends to vote for the motion to state his reasons for doing so, such has been the obloquy that has been thrown on those who support it.

Sir, I feel as strongly as any man can, the awful situation of this country; and I feel as much detestation for the wicked combination which has brought it into that situation as any gentleman who has spoken this night. If I could more emphatically express that detestation than they have done, I would do it. That situation, however, it is which imposes on the House a peculiar and imperious necessity of adopting every fair and honourable measure which may probably tend to lessen or avert the difficulties which press upon the State; and could I believe that by any sentiment which I shall utter this night those difficulties or the discontent of the country would be in any degree aggravated, my lips should be closed. No wish can be farther from my heart than to say anything which by possibility may have such a consequence.

It has been said by an honourable gentleman in the course of this debate [Mr. Daly], that there exist in Ireland only two parties: those who distrust and those who support the laws. The state of Ireland is not such as this division insinuates; for if it means anything, it must mean that there are only two parties in the country, one who support and the other who oppose the Government. I say there are in this country hundreds of thousands who, though they are neither in favour with the administration nor friends to their measures, but, on the contrary, dislike their principles and their system, yet are not with the United Irishmen, but entertain a stronger disapprobation of them and of their plots. In the north of Ireland there are numbers of men who understand the Constitution as well as any of the respectable assembly whom I address—men who not only know the Constitution but the best interests of this country better than any man who hears me, because their understandings are unsophisticated by that prejudice which I suppose it will not be denied is the natural result of peculiar situations and peculiar interests. These men are not combined with the traitors of the society of United Irishmen, and yet these men, however well inclined they may be to the British Constitution, may entertain a very strong dislike to Government and to their measures. If they see seats in this house bought and sold—if they not only see them bought, but made a retailable commodity in which Government traffics—

[Mr. Plunket was called to order by Mr. Bagwell, who said such language was unparliamentary, and ought not to be tolerated.]

Sir, the honourable member quite mistakes my meaning. I am as confident as the right hon. gentleman I address that no seat in this house was ever bought or

sold. No member in the house knows that this is impossible better than I do. But, sir, suppose those ignorant and foolish people of the north, of whom I have been speaking, were told, among many other equally false and slanderous tales that are every day circulated against our innocent Government, and against this most honourable and immaculate assembly—suppose they were told that seats were really bought and sold, and suppose they should be foolish enough to believe the story, what conclusion must they not draw from these premises? The learned members of this house who know what is meant by "knowledge of the world" and "the usage of Parliament," probably would speak of this practice by a soft name, but those unpolished people would certainly call such a traffic base. They would, no doubt, say it was a violation of the constitutional rights of the subject, a shameful debauchery of the morality of the nation, a scandalous departure from morals, the commencement of a crime among the higher ranks which must soon descend with accelerated velocity to the lower orders, where it will vitiate whatever is sound in their principles, and make loyalty itself venal. If such errors can possibly have crept among any class of the King's subjects, would it not be wise to conciliate such men, and make so many honest intelligent men fast friends to the Constitution and the Government, instead of leaving them to vibrate between loyalty and disaffection—a prize to reward the industry of sedition? Will you freeze that blood which, if you act as you ought, is ready to flow for your State?

Let me not be told that to agree to a motion of this kind is to conciliate traitors. Give me leave to tell you, sir, that the United Irishmen dread nothing so much as your granting such a measure. They tremble lest you

should, because if you do you tear off the mask with which they have hitherto covered themselves, and strip them of those pretexts by which they have crowded their ranks. It is by this mode you must put them down. The rebellion of the mind, by which you are assailed, is dreadful, and not to be combated by force. You have tried that remedy for three years, and the experiment has failed. You have stopped the mouth of the public by a Convention Bill—have committed the property and liberty of the people to the magistrate by the Insurrection Act; you have suspended the Habeas Corpus Act; you have had, and you have used, a strong military force—as great a force as you could call for; and there has been nothing that could tend to strengthen your hands or enable you to beat down this formidable conspiracy that you have not been invested with. What effect has your system produced? Discontent and sedition have grown threefold under your management. What objection, then, can you urge against trying another mode? If on trial it shall not be found to do good, you are only where you were. If it succeed, you have secured an inestimable benefit. Do not let me be understood as if I meant to withdraw from the hands of Government any of the strength which they possess at this moment. No, if more were wanted I would give it, if the traitors could be put down by it; but while you go with the sword in one hand, I would have you carry the olive in the other.

Gentlemen have talked of French principles. These principles have grown indeed, but it is because they were not resisted by proper means. I wonder not that when assailed by these principles, the rotten fabric of the French monarchy tumbled into atoms; nor do I wonder that they carried terror and destruction through the despotisms of Europe. But I did hope that when the hollow spectre

of French Democracy approached us it would have fled before the mild and chaste dignity of the British Constitution. It would have done so had you not destroyed the British Constitution before it reached us. You opposed it then with force, and its progress grew upon you. Restore the Constitution, and it will defend you from this monster. Reform your Parliament. Cease to bestow upon the worthless the wealth you extract from the bowels of your people. Let the principles of that Revolution which you profess to admire, regulate your conduct, and the horrid shade will melt into air before you.

You complain that French principles have taken hold of Ulster. The connexion then must have been forced, for they are not congenial. The people of the north are an industrious, plain, and sensible people. They have acquired property, and they know the worth of it. They have got a religious education, and they know the value of it. What have the atheism and frippery of France to do with such a people? What voluntary connexion would the religious people of the north have with the mad wickedness of those who have pulled down God from heaven to establish anarchy upon earth? I warn the Minister not to treat this as a mere colonial question; it is one in which the interests of the empire are deeply concerned. He has already passed a Bill of Indemnity for crimes committed against the people. It is now time he should pass one for the nation. I call on him to recollect how severely he will be liable to account to his country and to his own conscience, if he suffers this question to be made an instrument to separate the two countries.

Mr. Isaac Corry (Chancellor of the Exchequer,) replied, and the motion was lost by 156 to 19

votes. This was the last battle of any importance attempted by the opposition during that session. The circuits soon after went out, and the Rebellion followed, commencing on the 20th of May. It is quite unnecessary that I should enter into a description of this Irish "reign of terror." Throughout the country the rebels and loyalists vied with each other in every kind of barbarous violence, so that even at the present day it would not be easy to decide which party excelled the other. Even in the metropolis, where order was best maintained, the minds of men were kept in constant apprehension, and even within the walls of Parliament all ordinary business was at a standstill. Country gentlemen and barristers had their own business to attend to, a house could seldom be got together, and when assembled was generally employed in strengthening the hands of the Government against the rebels.

On several occasions, however, we find Mr. Plunket exerting himself to mitigate the vindictiveness exhibited by some of the more violent loyalists. For instance, when a bill was proposed for the purpose of sheltering those magistrates who had exceeded the limits of their authority in their zeal against all who were suspected, though unjustly, of rebellion, Mr. Plunket urged that innocent persons who had suffered loss by

the excessive loyalty of the magistrates intended to be shielded by the bill, should also be indemnified (out of the public purse), as their legal means of redress was to be taken away. This suggestion, however, was not accepted, and the Indemnity Act was speeded so as to be in time for the approaching assizes. We also find him cross-examining the witnesses who were produced to support bills of attainder against Lord Edward Fitzgerald and others. However, he never compromised his own character of attachment to the Constitution; and when Arthur O'Connor, Addis Emmett, and Macnevin, after their commutation of sentence, published a manifesto exciting the people to further resistance, we find Plunket speaking with indignation of the ingratitude of persons who were, as he said, "singular instances of mercy," and urging "that every step should be taken to prevent these State prisoners from corrupting the public mind."

At the end of June Lord Cornwallis arrived in Ireland, and a more lenient system of government was at once commenced by the proclamation of amnesty to all persons in revolt who should come in and surrender their arms within a certain time. This change of spirit found little favour in some quarters, but it was generally received with the most joyful gratitude, and Parliament was prorogued on the 6th of October, 1798.

CHAPTER III

IRISH WHIGS IN '98—STYLE IN THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS—LORD CASTLEREAGH—IRISH VOLUNTEERS—FRENCH PRINCIPLES—LORD FITZWILLIAM—UNITED IRISHMEN—THE REBELLION—THE UNION AND THE BAR—THE "ANTI-UNION"—FIRST DEBATE ON THE UNION.

THE reader has already been able to form some idea of the feelings of rage and grief with which Mr. Plunket and others of his party watched the steady approach of that formidable measure, which, if successful, must for ever sweep away all the hopes that they had learnt to cherish, both for their country and themselves. In their theory of Irish politics they saw the Parliament, not as it really was, but as it might have been; they chose to believe that it was still in 1798 what it had been declared to be in 1783—a national legislature, in no way dependent on, or responsible to the British Government; and they clung faithfully to Grattan's grand idea that by wise reforms in the Parliament, and by the common labours, and mutual forbearance of all classes of the people, Ireland might be raised into a state of equality with England; united with her under one sovereign,

and acting with her for the common object of a great foreign policy, but enjoying at home whatever was proud and ennobling in the boast of nationality.

This was the position assumed by the patriotic party from the first in the debates upon the measure of Union; and they held it desperately to the last. In defence of it, they were able to rely upon the condition of the Irish Parliament, which was theoretically the same in every particular as that of England, and whose equality and independence had been recognized and guaranteed in the most solemn form by the authority of the King, Lords, and Commons of each legislature separately. To dislodge them from such a position by abstract reasoning was impossible; but Lord Castlereagh was able to apply a practical test much more decisive than any mere verbal argument. He proved the actual dependence of the Irish Parliament by purchasing in twelve months the votes of a majority of its members, and the helplessness of the Irish people by wresting from them that Parliament without the spilling of a drop of blood.

These considerations may serve to explain the contrast that will be found to exist between Mr. Plunket's speeches in the Irish House of Commons, against the enactment of the Union,

and those which he afterwards delivered in the united Parliament, when advocating the emancipation of the Roman Catholics. The former are less known—scarcely at all known in England; their topic has not such immediate interest for this generation, nor is their style so much in unison with the taste of the present day; and yet, if we realize the excitement of the scene in which they were delivered, the immense difficulties with which the speaker had to contend, we may perhaps deem these earlier efforts to be more extraordinary specimens of intellectual power; as invectives, they have been declared by high authority entitled to equal rank with the Philippics of Demosthenes. In the British House of Commons, Mr. Plunket had to support a case thoroughly sound both practically and theoretically. He pleaded before an honest tribunal, and he looked forward with confidence to the ultimate success of the measure he advocated. His arguments were carefully considered and calmly reasoned out; they were exhaustive and complete, resting both on the expediency and the justice of his cause; and when he rose into the loftier regions of eloquence, he could appeal to great principles of philanthropy and human equity. But in the Irish House of Commons his task was very different. Thoroughly in earnest himself, the only feelings he could hope

to touch in the breasts of his hearers were the conscious virtue and the unconscious vanity of a few, the shame and fear of the rest. In this and in the following chapter we shall see with what skill and fire he roused the enthusiasm of the patriotic party, with what terrible scorn he denounced the baseness of their opponents, above all, with what extraordinary force and courage he opposed the Minister whose policy he found himself powerless to defeat.

The men whom Plunket had to address in the Irish Parliament might have been divided into three classes, for I set aside the very few who voted with the Government on grounds of patriotism uninfluenced by private interest. First, there were those pledged to Government, who had, in fact, already made their market: these men were to be held up to such hatred and contempt as, though it should not effect a change in their conduct, might deter others from joining their ranks. There was another class, composed of those who were known to be incorruptible, or who had utterly committed themselves against the measure; these were to be congratulated on their virtue and the success of their efforts, and to be stimulated to fresh exertions. But the class principally to be influenced were those whose votes were wavering, and whose conduct was

alternately swayed by the bribe of the Minister and by the dread of popular hatred and of the contempt of their fellow-members. Above all, Mr. Plunket had in his own character to establish a counterpoise to the weight that the personal influence of Lord Castlereagh threw into the Government scale.

The latter was cool, fearless, impassive, steady to his purpose. It was necessary that if Mr. Plunket could not make him wince, he should at all events endeavour to show his conduct in an aspect at once formidable and mean.

This is a gloomy and humiliating statement, but it is a true one. It is, however, also true that this corrupt assembly cannot fairly be looked upon as the mirror of national character and national honour. The members of the majority, who voted for the Union, were not the representatives of the people, but the hired servants of the Minister; for the Parliament had been packed for the purpose.

The reader who has not carefully studied this saddest page of Irish history may well wonder how the Parliament that had in 1782 responded so enthusiastically to the eloquence and the patriotic aspirations of Grattan and of Flood, and had then obtained such ample admissions of their independence, such large concessions

of power, can have, in fifteen years, sunk to such a depth of degradation. It is a melancholy story, but not without its moral, and it is necessary to retrace it in order to understand the true character of the assembly for whose life Plunket had to plead.*

The concessions made to the claims of the patriotic party in 1782 were, on the part of the English Government, granted as the only alternative for a war between the two countries. England was at that time struggling hard with her revolted colonies. France threatened her coasts, and an army of nearly ninety thousand Irish Volunteers, drilled and armed, claimed, first, the removal of commercial restraints that the jealousy of English traders had in old times imposed upon Irish enterprise; and, secondly, the declaration of the independence of the Irish legislature and judicature. These demands were supported by men of all creeds and parties in the upper and middle classes, backed with enthusiasm by the masses of the people. For once in their history, Irishmen, without distinction of religion or politics, were found standing together as a nation, and, under such circumstances, resistance would have been im-

* Sir Arthur Wellesley, who had for some years been a member of the Irish House of Commons, thoroughly despised that assembly. Writing home from India when the Union contest was raging, he said, "There must be no more *debating societies* in Ireland."—*Letter to Rev. Wm. Elliott.*

possible. Besides, many of the English Ministers who just then came into power had to some extent committed themselves to the more advanced opinions of the day. It was therefore a moral as well as a physical necessity that these concessions should be made; and they were made in most solemn form. The Irish people believed in their sincerity, and were satisfied. Grattan, speaking their sentiments of gratitude and enthusiasm, said—

I am not very old, and yet I remember Ireland a child. I have watched her growth; from infancy she grew to arms; from arms to liberty. She is not now afraid of the French; she is not now afraid of the English; she is not now afraid of herself. Her sons are no longer an arbitrary gentry; a ruined commonalty; Protestants oppressing Catholics, Catholics groaning under oppression—but she is now a united land. . . . If ministers have the same powers and the same sentiments in office that they had when in opposition, if they are not afraid of Ireland, if they mean to redress and not merely pacify this country, they will give us *ample* and *unqualified redress; the Irish people* then are their *friends*, the *volunteers* are their *army*, and *we* are their supporters. We will give them a support very different from the canting of moderation, or that sort of pensioned loyalty whose exertions never went beyond these walls; but then the redress must be *manly* and strictly constitutional—there must be no *shuffling*, no *artful delay*.

It was believed that a new era had been commenced in which the servants of the Crown in

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Ireland should no longer enjoy their offices without enjoying also the confidence of the people, and the government of Ireland be conducted independently of the decisions of the English Parliament. So long as the organization of the volunteers existed, no doubt was raised on these subjects. But there were, however, three radical weaknesses in the Irish House of Commons, which, so soon as the national army was dissolved, made it easy for English Ministers to bring it back to its former state of dependence. These three evils might have been removed. The first, by reforming the representation so as to take it out of the hands of a few persons who had always been willing to barter their influence with the Government for places, pensions, and peerages. The second, by emancipating the Catholics. Grattan said:—"We moved a reform bill that should have given a constitution to the people, and the emancipation that should have given a people to the constitution." The third, by weeding out the growth of government placemen and pensioners with whom the House of Commons was crowded. Such changes, however, would have destroyed the great monopoly of the "undertakers" of the Irish Parliament, and were not to be expected from them of their own accord. Whether the Liberal politicians of the day

might have extorted them by the assistance of the volunteers is another question; they, however, considered such means unconstitutional, and when measures of reform and emancipation were debated in the Convention of United Volunteers,* their discussion was received coldly by Henry Grattan and the other respectable members of the Liberal party, and they were, of course, discredited by the more Conservative leaders.

How critical Mr. Fox considered that moment for the destiny of Ireland may be seen by the expressions he used in writing (Nov. 1, 1783,) to the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Northington, on this subject :—

I want words to express to you how *critical*, in the genuine sense of the word, I conceive the present moment to be: if the volunteers will not dissolve in a reasonable time, the Government and even the name of it must be at an end. Immense concessions were made in the Duke of Portland's time, and these concessions were declared by an almost unanimous House of Commons to be sufficient. The account must be considered to have been closed on the day of that vote, and should never again be opened on any pretext whatever.†

* The assembly was presided over by the eccentric prelate and peer Lord Bristol (Bishop of Derry) and by Mr. Flood.

† *Memorials and Correspondence of C. J. Fox*, vol. ii. pp. 163, 164. There can be no doubt that Mr. Pitt was, at the beginning of his career, more inclined than his great Whig rival to measures substantially liberal in Irish politics. In 1785 he had everything prepared for an extensive measure of parliamentary reform, but was obliged to abandon it at the time, owing to

The friends of Government in Ireland were not slow to act upon this hint. Lord Northington wrote (Nov. 17, 1783,) to Mr. Fox:—"Our next step was by means of our friends in the Assembly" (*i. e.* the Convention of Volunteers,) "to perplex its proceedings, and to create confusion in its deliberations."* And again:—"Another desirable step was to involve them, if possible, with the House of Commons." This policy succeeded; the volunteers bewildered between their loyalty and their patriotism, divided between their love of the constitution and their love of country, knew not which way to turn; they found their political

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the desperate opposition of the dominant party in Ireland. And before he had again an opportunity of pressing the measure the breaking out of the French Revolution gave a new turn on many questions to the great statesman's mind, and the collision which so nearly occurred between the parliaments of England and of Ireland on the subject of the Regency Bill in 1788, showed him the inherent difficulties growing out of really independent and coëqual legislatures in the sister islands.

* *Ibid.* p. 175. In the same letter he thus excuses his not having dealt more vigorously with the volunteers. "I am thoroughly disposed to meet them with resolution when the Government can properly act, but that period is not in my opinion yet arrived. If you consider the consequence and credit these volunteers have obtained; that at the time those great concessions were made in the Duke of Portland's administration the address of the two Houses of Parliament was carried up between rows of volunteers under arms; that our friend Richard, then secretary, in an interruption of a debate, acquainting the House of the Duke of Portland's waiting for them, assigned as an additional apology, that there was a number of respectable and worthy men under arms to do honour to the business of that day; that they have received three times the thanks of Parliament for their good conduct. . . . After a mature consideration of these matters you will not be surprised that the idea of Government's interference to prevent this meeting met with no advocates to support it." Richard here mentioned was the son of Edmund Burke.

action no longer encouraged by those whose advice they had been accustomed to obey: the Government said there was no further occasion for their services to meet a foreign invasion; and their own leaders told them that they were no longer required to repel the political aggression of their fellow-subjects. Thus discouraged—almost discredited—the great national army melted away. The proprietors of the Irish Parliament doubtless felt much relieved. They had run a fearful risk of losing the source of much pleasure and huge profit; but they had not lost it. The danger once over they clung more closely to their old and valued constitution. There was less chance than ever of any parliamentary measures tending towards a reform of the representation, or towards religious equality. The English Government returned to its old system, resolved to recover, by purchasing additional influence in the House of Commons, what it had lost by the repeal of the laws of Poynings, and of 6 George I. Grattan soon saw how he had been outwitted, and found that whilst he had supposed the intention of the Ministry to be to raise Ireland into a nation wholly independent of England, though united with her under the same Crown, nothing was intended further than a mere technical concession which should please and pacify a national ambition that it would have

been dangerous to oppose.* In 1790 (Feb. 11), addressing the Irish Parliament, he said :—

This country is placed in a sort of interval between the cessation of a system of oppression, and the formation of a system of corruption; the former affects her no longer; the latter has only begun within the walls of certain august bodies, and will take time to propagate all its poisons into the mass of the country; but go on for ten or twelve years as you have done in the last five; increase in the same proportion your number of parliamentary places; increase as you have done your annual charge every five years of peace, 183,000*l.*; get every five years new taxes and apply them as you have done, and then the minister will find that he has impaired the trade and agriculture as well as destroyed the virtue and the freedom of the country.

About this time, 1790, the Irish question began to assume a new phase. Ireland had not escaped the influence of the French Revolution, and the element of democracy was now added to the other embarrassments of the Government.

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* Pitt gave the following account of these concessions in the English House of Commons when speaking in reply to Sheridan upon the question of union (January 23, 1799):—"I am now about to notice what has been alluded to by the honourable gentleman (Sheridan) as a final adjustment, and I can undertake to state that this final adjustment was made under the pretence of redressing existing grievances without looking to future consequences, or even taking a general or necessary view of circumstances; it was dictated by the spirit of momentary popularity, and was not founded in the best interests of the country. Having created two distinct Parliaments equally able and competent to decide or dictate upon all questions of peace and war, on all points of trade and commerce, it left them as much divided on all material points about which nations may contest as any two powers on the Continent."

The revolutionary infection was first caught by the independent Dissenters of the North, but soon spread with alarming rapidity through the densely crowded ranks of the Catholics, and they began to dream of winning emancipation from their serfdom by force. Pitt determined to be beforehand with them, and Mr. Hobart,* Under-Secretary for Ireland, at his desire, so far threw the influence of Government into the hands of the Liberal party in the Irish Parliament, that they were able to carry a measure of relief to the Catholics, which, though it stopped far short of modern ideas of religious equality, was an inestimable boon to the objects of it—nevertheless the revolutionary leaven did not cease to work. Those who sought for further reforms saw in the moment of "England's difficulty Ireland's opportunity," and pressed the Minister hard. There was at the time in Ireland the nucleus of a party whose demands, formed after French models, went far beyond anything that could be granted within the constitution. But such Republicans were still few, and in order to prevent the dissatisfied, but not yet disloyal, mass of the Catholics from falling into the hands of this party, Mr. Pitt took advantage of the accession to the ministry of the Duke of Portland and his friends, to give further encouragement to the Liberal party

* Afterwards succeeded to the Earldom of Buckinghamshire.

in Ireland. This was done by sending to Ireland as Lord Lieutenant the man who of all others, by his personal character as well as by his political sentiments, was calculated to inspire the moderate patriotic party with confidence; that man was Earl Fitzwilliam.* He arrived in Ireland in the end of 1794, and was received with a hearty welcome and an exhibition of popular enthusiasm more unanimous than any the country had seen for ten years. The hopes of the Liberal party rose high; they thought that the policy attempted by Lord Temple in 1783, would now be carried through by Lord Fitzwilliam; that public robbery and monopoly would be rooted out; that the people should no longer be governed by dividing class against class, but by the united energies of a free Parliament. But though this fond construction was put upon the appointment of Lord Fitzwilliam both by the Irish people and by that nobleman himself, no such important changes were intended by Mr. Pitt. In a private memorandum written at the time he attaches the following proviso to the change in the Lord Lieutenancy:—"All idea of a new system of measures or of new principles of government in Ireland, as well as any separate

* William Wentworth Fitzwilliam (4th earl), born 1748, died 1833. Most of his lordship's property lay in Ireland, where he was personally very popular. At this time he was President of the Council, as he was afterwards in the Grenville Ministry, 1806.

and exclusive right to conduct the department of Ireland differently from any other in the King's service, is to be disclaimed and relinquished."*

That this was not the meaning attached to his appointment by Lord Fitzwilliam himself is evident from the course he adopted immediately upon his coming to the country. He not only intimated to a deputation of Catholics that waited upon him that a new system was about to be adopted towards them, but he gave a startling proof of his sincerity by at once proposing to substitute Ponsonby and Curran in the places of Wolfe and Toler as Attorney and Solicitor General, and by dismissing one of the Beresfords from the office of Commissioner of the Revenue. The office was not a very important one, but this made the act the more significant. The Beresfords were, of all the great Protestant families through whom the government had been hitherto conducted, the most important. It was said of them, that one-fourth of all the places in the island was filled by this family. The whole of the old dominant party now felt that their dearest interests were at stake, and roused themselves to action.† They possessed

* Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, vol. ii. p. 291.

† A somewhat similar panic, which occurred twelve years before, when Lord Temple in 1782 threatened to bring a Government defaulter to account, is amusingly described in Hardy's *Life of Lord Charlemont* (vol. ii. p. 65). "Lord Shannon's patronage, though supported by more

considerable interest in London, for it was by their assistance, and upon their representations, that the English Government had long ruled Ireland. Mr. Beresford was accordingly himself despatched to represent to his friends at head-quarters the outrage which he considered had been put upon him. Whether the Government should favour the principle of concession to the Catholics was a question that had trembled in the balance of the cabinet deliberations, the exertions of Mr. Beresford and his friends turned the scale, and Lord Fitzwilliam was recalled. The excitement throughout Ireland was intense. Both Houses of Parliament passed unanimously votes of confidence in the Lord Lieutenant, which were followed by addresses from every part of the country. On the day he quitted Dublin, all shops were closed, and the whole city presented an aspect of gloom. On that day the Irish people abandoned all hope that the promised reforms would be earnestly attempted by the legislature.

The Catholics of the south and the Presbyterians of the north might now make common

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than half-a-dozen members of the House of Commons, was, for the first time, found inadequate. The dismay was terrible. . Clerks, treasurers, and secretaries fled in all quarters. Some chiefs of particular departments did not indeed fly, but menaced or muttered eternal vengeance against Lord Temple. They shuddered to behold the ancient abodes of peculation on the point of being exposed to the public eye of day."

cause, for all the many proscribed classes had learnt that the Parliament of Ireland was but a small and corrupt faction, a faction which believed itself able to defy the wishes, and was determined to ignore the rights, of the great majority of their fellow-countrymen.

The people were thus given to understand that the policy of conciliation had been tried and finally abandoned; acting upon this hint, they commenced a system of military organization which spread rapidly throughout the country.* The Protestant party began also to arm, and an encounter soon took place; it occurred in the autumn of 1795 at a little village in the county of Armagh, called "The Diamond." In it the Protestants, though much out-numbered, were victorious, and to commemorate their success the Orange Society was for the first time established.

* "The military organization" (of the United Irishmen) "had no existence until towards the latter end of 1796, and was as nearly as possible engrafted in the civil. . . . In many instances the lower orders went about to private houses to search for arms; this the executive (of the United Irishmen) constantly endeavoured to prevent, because they were unwilling to raise alarm amomgst their adversaries, or let the members of their body acquire habits of plunder, and be confounded with robbers. They endeavoured to dissuade them from these acts by representing to the people that the arms would always be kept in better condition by the gentlemen than by them, and could be easily seized whenever necessary. In other respects, our stores were in the arsenal at the Castle and the military depôts throughout the country; our supplies were in the Treasury!" —*Memoirs of the Confessions of T. A. Emmett, A. O'Connor, and M'Nevin before Secret Committees of the Houses of Lords and Commons, in the Summer of* 1798. Printed by P. Robinson, Paternoster Row. 1802. pp. 11, 12.

Then commenced a system of ferocious terrorism on the part of the loyalists, for which reprisals were made by their opponents in the form of murder, destruction of property, and seizing of arms. By these means the country was soon reduced to that state of total anarchy which immediately preceded the Union, and of which I have already spoken.

Pitt had long before this time finally determined that such a measure as he afterwards developed in the Act of Union, was the only measure that could afford any hope of a comprehensive and substantial improvement in this unhappy country, and strike at the root of its ancient evils. He had resolved that the Irish Parliament should not be really independent of that of England, and that therefore there should be no such political or religious reforms in the former body as should give it living energy within or popular support without. He had seen by the experience of 1783 and of 1793 that half measures, while they did not satisfy the Liberal, estranged the Conservative, section of the Irish community. He knew that under the existing system nothing but bloodshed and anarchy could be expected, and he therefore wished that a measure to abolish that system should be brought forward at the earliest opportunity. That opportunity was

afforded in the summer of 1798. At that time the Rebellion had broken out, and had been extinguished in blood. By the horrors that attended that terrible event, the physical energies of the Irish, as a people, were so split up and disorganized that combination of the various classes for any national object became for the time impossible. The various ranks of society that had made common cause in support of the English connection were wholly committed against the great masses of the people who had been favourable to, or had actually taken part in, the rebellion. Besides, the executive had been armed with the powers of a military dictatorship; physical resistance to the Act of Union must be hopeless. It is by no means certain that the masses of the Roman Catholic people were, at the time the Union was brought forward, disposed to resist it. They had lost all hope of any concessions from the bigoted and corrupt assembly which the measure was to sweep away, and a promise (as they thought it) had been held out to them that Catholic emancipation and other benefits to their order should be the price of their acquiescence in the carrying of the Union.

The Parliament itself had also been by that time almost made ready for the proposal that it should perform "*the happy despatch.*" Not only

had it earned the contempt of the people, but its own internal corruption had nearly been brought to perfection. Even since 1785 considerable additions had been made to the patronage available for political purposes. Fifteen new parliamentary places, created in 1789; five Treasury places in 1793; and since then thirty-two militia colonelcies and thirty-two county judgeships.* Besides all this, the secession of Henry Grattan from the House of Commons had removed almost the last obstacle to the absolute will of the Minister.

To such a condition had the country come, and to such a state had Parliament been brought, when Pitt sent over Lord Cornwallis to Ireland, to offer with one hand a policy of conciliation to the people, but with the other to thrust the Act of Union on the House of Commons. For, however submissive the legislature had become on all points that concerned only the interests of the people at large, it was certain that they would show some spirit on the question of their own existence.

Accordingly the measure was allowed to leak out cautiously in semi-official newspaper paragraphs and rumours spread from the Castle. Next came a pamphlet, entitled, *Arguments for and against an Union between Great Britain and Ireland con-*

* *Life of Henry Grattan*, by his Son. Vol. v. pp. 5, 6.

sidered. This was the production of Mr. Edward Cooke, the Lord Lieutenant's secretary; it was published in the spring of 1798, in a pamphlet containing sixty-four pages, at the price of one *British* shilling; the intense interest excited by it, may be judged from the fact, that by the month of December it had run to a ninth edition! The challenge thus thrown down was at once accepted by the opposition. Charles Bushe replied in an ironical *brochure*, entitled, *Cease your Funning! or the Rebel Detected.* The author, whilst professing himself an advocate of Union, affects to have discovered in Mr. Cooke's pamphlet the insidious attempts of an enemy in disguise to bring that measure into ridicule and contempt by taking up the most untenable positions, and advancing the most unpopular arguments in its defence.* The pamphlet opens thus:—

I love wit as much as any man, but a joke may certainly sometimes be carried too far. I have never

* "The plan of such an irony is, for such a long work, necessarily defective. It must needs degenerate occasionally into tameness, and it runs the risk every now and then of being taken for serious, as I well remember an ironical defence of the slave-trade once upon a time so much failed of its object, that some worthy abolitionists were preparing an answer to it, when they were informed that the author was an ally in disguise. No such fate was likely to befall *Cease your Funning.* It is, indeed, admirably executed, as successfully as a work on such a plan can be, and reminds the reader of the best of Dean Swift's political writings, being in every way worthy of his pen."—*Brougham's Statesmen of the Reign of George III.*, p. 229.

submitted to the justice of Lord Shaftesbury's fanciful position, *that ridicule is the test of truth*, and I own I think its application is particularly offensive when political subjects of the deepest and most serious importance are treated with idle levity and buffoon irony. These sentiments have been principally excited by reading a pamphlet entitled *Arguments for and against an Union considered.* The author of this work has evidently written after the model of some of Swift's lighter compositions; a style which in my opinion has never till now been successfully imitated: it consists altogether in supporting, in a strain of grave irony, the opposite of the opinion you mean to establish. It is a good-humoured application of the argument called by logicians *argumentum ad absurdum;* but, whether it partakes more of jest or sophism, I again protest against the use of either upon subjects of national importance and public concern. I shall briefly enumerate a few of the most prominent of the artifices by which the author of this work, who I am convinced is either a member of opposition, or an absolute "United Irishman" in disguise, endeavours, by an affected recommendation of the measure, to cry down and depreciate the projected Union, the only chance of this country's salvation; premising that in order to give a higher relish to his ridicule, he has had the address to circulate a report with very successful industry that the work in question is the production of an English gentleman of very considerable talents, who is an Irish member of Parliament, and in high official position at the Castle. Indeed such has been the prevalence of this report, and so well simulated is the mask assumed, that on the first perusal I was scarcely able to distinguish whether the author was in earnest or not; and I am credibly

informed that to this hour many well-meaning people continue in the erroneous opinion that he was so.

Such a production was peculiarly adapted for its purpose, suiting in its style the literary taste of its readers, and also as treating the proposed measure as one which was not capable of being seriously entertained. This was the tone which many of the anti-Unionists persisted in adopting so long as it was at all possible to do so.

The first demonstration of a public kind against the measure of Union was made at a meeting of the barristers which was held on the 9th December, 1798. Nothing can give a more vivid idea of the excitement produced by the threat of Union than the circumstances connected with this meeting. Mr. Saurin,* who at that day was the leader of the profession in Ireland, had some years before been elected to the command of the Lawyers' Volunteer Corps on the grounds of his well-known loyalty and discretion. Yet this grave, constitu-

* William Saurin was descended from an old Huguenot family, whose name is distinguished in French literature. His ancestors, driven from France on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, settled in Ireland. He was born in 1758; entered Dublin University in 1775; called to the Bar 1780; Attorney-General from 1807 to 1821; continued to enjoy great Chancery practice until 1831, when he retired from the Bar, of which he was then the father; died in 1839. He was a profound lawyer and an able advocate, and in private life, amiable and blameless; but in politics he identified himself with principles of the strictest religious exclusion, and with a system of coercion towards the Roman Catholics.

tional lawyer thought it not unbecoming in him to issue the following general order to his corps :—

Lawyers' Infantry.—The corps is ordered to parade at twelve at noon at the new court in the new regimentals. A punctual attendance is requested, as business of the utmost importance is to be transacted.

(Signed) STEWART KING, *Adjutant.*

The important business alluded to was none other than a proposition that the lawyers' corps should call upon all the yeomanry throughout the kingdom to pledge themselves to oppose to the last the measure of a legislative union. The majority of the Bar, however, expressed the opinion that such an armed assembly was not a respectable occasion on which to discuss a parliamentary measure, and the order was consequently changed into one postponing the parade of the corps, but calling the barristers to attend a meeting of their body in its civil capacity.* They met accordingly on the 9th of December. The discussion was opened by Mr. Saurin, who, in a temperate speech, moved that "the measure of a legislative union of Great Britain is an innovation which it would be highly dangerous and improper to propose at the present juncture of affairs in this country." Broad grounds were taken in support of this reso-

* *Cornwallis Correspondence*, vol. iii. pp. 4, 5.

lution by every man of position at the profession; it was said that the effect of the measure, if carried, would be to reduce Ireland from the position of an independent country to that of a province; and that such a measure presented to an unwilling people, at a moment when they were unable to express their dissent, and forced upon them by the influences of fear and corruption, would want all the attributes of a constitutional enactment, must lead to fresh rebellion, and would ultimately break the connection between the two countries. Plunket, having urged the danger and impropriety of agitating the question of Union at such a time as the present, said :—

Should the administration propose that measure now, it will be carried. For animosity and want of time to consider coolly its consequences, and forty thousand British troops in Ireland, will carry the measure. But in a little time the people will awaken as from a dream, and what consequences will follow I tremble to think. For myself I declare that I oppose a union principally because I am convinced that it will accelerate a total separation of the two countries.

An adjournment was moved by Mr. St. George Daly, a briefless barrister, who was the first supporter of the Union, and subsequently Chief Baron of the Exchequer; of all men, he was the least thought of for preferments; but it was wittily observed "that the Union was the first brief

Mr. Daly had spoken from." This adjournment was also supported by a few obscure practitioners, but, on a division, it could only command 32 votes against 162! The original motion was carried.

The Government chose to consider and to treat this opposition as factious. Lord Cornwallis wrote to the Duke of Portland, on the fifteenth of December,—

> Your Grace will probably have seen in the papers an account of the violence which disgraced the meeting of the barristers, and of the miserable figure which the friends of Union made on a division, of 32 against 162.
>
> The bankers and merchants are to meet on Tuesday next: I do not expect a more favourable division on that occasion. In point of indecency of manners and language they cannot surpass the gentlemen of the learned profession.*

I may be excused if I here make a criticism upon this most interesting correspondence, which has become the most popular, as it is certainly the most authentic, source of information as to the immediate circumstances connected with the carrying of the Union. It is with reference to the opinions expressed by Lord Cornwallis as to the conduct and motives of those who resolutely opposed the measure. In his letters, this nobleman exhibits his character as that of a wise and

* *Cornwallis Correspondence*, vol. iii. p. 18.

upright statesman, and of a brave, honest, and unselfish man, who had undertaken, in the course of his duty, a most distasteful though a necessary task, viz., by one great act of parliamentary bribery, to put an end for ever to an old-established system of national corruption. He writes like one who, through a long life in many countries, had had opportunities of studying human nature, and he exhibits the contempt and disgust which he felt for those whose desires and prejudices it was necessary for him to gratify; but he goes further, and extends to all those who opposed him, corresponding motives of selfishness and interest, unmitigated by any better feeling, and he always speaks of the opposition as factious and unprincipled. That, in the heat and irritation of carrying out his disagreeable duty, he should have spoken harshly of men into whose position he could not enter, and whose sympathies and prejudices he could not understand, is most excusable; but his opinion of some at least of his opponents was not fair, and should not be received with the same implicit confidence with which we accept his statements as to matters of fact.

It is but just to remember that, while Cornwallis saw in Ireland only a province, and considered the legislative Union only as a great imperial

measure, that might advance the interests of Irishmen, but would certainly consolidate the strength and stability of the empire, Plunket loved Ireland for her own sake, as an independent country, united only to England by a community in liberty at home, and power abroad—and believed that the Act of Union was not only a doubtful experiment as regards material prosperity, but that it would, if carried, be the first of a series of measures of centralization, by which at last all traces of an independent nationality must be effaced—that he had received these opinions through the doctrines and the eloquence of such statesmen and patriots as Ponsonby and Grattan, and that they had been illustrated by the approval of such characters as Moira and Charlemont. It is fair also to bear in mind that all the inducements that prevailed over others were also held out to him, but that his opposition was even more uncompromising when resistance had become hopeless, and ultimate defeat was only a question of time.*

* The fearful temptations by which the sincerity of the anti-Union champions was tested, may be realized from the following description of the conduct of Charles Kendal Bushe :—"His case was peculiar and interesting, and for his character and that of his country deserves to be recorded. Bushe's father had died owing considerable debts, which his son was not in law bound to pay; but he considered that he was so in honour, and though encumbered with a large family, without fortune of his own, and with small professional rank at the time, he discharged them all. . . . The offer was made to him: any terms that would be asked were to be complied with; but he refused every temptation. After this interview, when he

To return to the progress of the measure. The bankers and the merchants, the various trades and professions, held meetings to protest against it, and all these assemblies, while they were marked by the utmost order and strongest loyalty, were unanimous against the Union. But in spite of such expressions of disapprobation, the Government held steadily on its way; addresses were procured throughout the provinces wherever it was possible to obtain them, and all means were taken to encourage the Catholics by hopes of redress as a consequence of the Union; while, at the same time, the stronger loyalists were led to consider the cause of the anti-Unionists as nearly allied with that of the rebels. But the opponents of the Union were neither few nor fearful, and had at their command intellectual resources that long enabled them to conceal their real inability to offer successful opposition to the Government.

The Bar at that time contained all that was most eloquent and witty in the country, and the Bar were committed, both by their principles and their interests, against the Union. A few of

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reflected on the state of his affairs in ruin, and beheld his family so straitened in circumstances (he stated this to me himself), 'I threw myself in my chair, and for a moment almost doubted whether it was right for me to keep in such a state so many human beings, when I thought on the splendid offers I had refused—offers that astonished, almost bewildered me.' Bushe was incorruptible," &c.—*Life of H. Grattan*, by his Son. Vol. v. pp. 114, 115.

them, however, the Government had succeeded in securing, and these latter toiled most zealously. The press teemed with pamphlets on both sides of the question. Mr. Cooke's serious argument for the Union, and Bushe's witty reply to him, have already been noticed. One of the best of these productions came from the pen of Goold, and above a hundred other able pamphlets still exist as records of the literary skirmishing with which the Union campaign was opened.

On Thursday, the 27th of December, was published the first number of the famous *Anti-Union* newspaper. To it Grattan, Plunket, Bushe, Burrowes, and Smyly were the chief contributors. Its earlier numbers are very carefully composed; and, though ridicule is the favourite weapon of its writers, there will also be found in its pages vigorous argument and pathetic appeal. It contained two sheets, and was published three times a week, at the price of twopence. Thirty-one numbers are all that now remain; the last bears date the 7th of March, 1799, and it seems to have been then abandoned. In its third number appeared a letter, addressed to the editor, and signed Sheelagh, written by Plunket, from which I select the following passages. Sheelagh is, of course, Ireland; Mr. Bull, England; and the marriage in question is the Union:—

SIR,—

I am a young woman descended of a very ancient family, but owing to the thoughtlessness of my ancestors, and some foolish disputes between them, aggravated by obstinate litigation, as to the title of a small family estate, I was, at a very early period of life, thrown, as I may say, upon the world with little more than youth, health, and a good temper, to support me. I set up a shop, furnished with but a few trifling articles, and although I encountered many difficulties, my situation gradually improved, and in the course of a few years, I began to think of enlarging my trade and bettering my condition. The chief obstacle I had to encounter in this was the jealousy and ill-nature of a distant relation by the mother's side, who lived at no great distance from me, and who had taken advantage of my infancy and poverty, to treat me as a mere dependant, and to counteract all my efforts for opulence and comfort. These pretensions of his arose from the natural pride and imperiousness of his disposition, joined to a sordid and dishonest wish to get possession of my family estate, to which he had no other claim than that it lay contiguous to his own, and that we both held under the same landlord. At the particular period which I have already alluded to, my project of more extended commercial dealings alarmed all his bad feelings; our trade was of the same kind; I was placed in a situation more convenient for customers; and although my capital was smaller, yet as I was subject to less house-rent, he apprehended I might deal on more advantageous terms. He insisted, therefore, that I should submit all my affairs to his management; that I should not engage in any business without his permission, and that all my receipts and expenditures should be regulated by persons

of his appointment, and accountable merely to him. These proposals were so preposterous and unjust that I positively refused to comply with them, and having now got some money and many friends, who were all hearty in my cause, I spoke out boldly to Mr. Bull, and told him plainly that he must not intermeddle in my concerns; that I was willing to live on terms of friendship with him, as relations should do, and that he might probably find his account in such a commerce, but that if he should attempt to force me into compliance, his friends and mine must try whose heads were hardest.

* * * * *

It seems that for some time past he has engaged in a course of very ridiculous extravagance, and wasted a great part of his property in groundless litigation. This has been partly owing to his haughty, purse-proud temper, but principally to the ill-advised chimerical plans of a head-clerk* whom he has employed in his office, and to whom he has committed the management of all his affairs, with a blind and unaccountable infatuation. This person, whose father was very worthy and respectable, and who set out in life himself with a good character, has played the strangest set of pranks that ever were thought of by mortal man. To describe to you the dance he has led Mr. Bull would be an endless task,—vapouring about economical expenditure, and increased revenue, till he has left him without a guinea; and swaggering in support of the relations of amity and peace, till he has involved him in deadly variances with all his neighbours; suffice it to say, that he has so bewildered the mind, and fatigued the body, and exhausted the wealth of his unfortunate employer,

* Mr. Pitt.

that, from a reasonable, healthy, affluent man, he has become a flimsy invalid, and, in point of credit, little better than a kite-flyer. But to come to what chiefly concerns myself. This adventurer, finding that all his prospects are nearly blown up, and dreading the fatal consequences which must ensue from an abrupt disclosure to Mr. Bull and his family, of the miserable extremity to which he has reduced them, has formed the scheme of getting possession of me and all I am worth, in the hope of making what they call a stop-gap of me, and so protracting, for a while, the inevitable hour of his own disgrace and punishment. For this unworthy purpose he has contrived to introduce into my house a set of his own creatures, whose object is to excite dissension amongst the family. One, in particular, who called himself a Cook,* but really had been a scullion in Mr. Bull's family, I was prevailed on to hire as a shop-boy, though he was very ragged, and had no discharge to produce; and notwithstanding his being very useless and very saucy, yet, having taken him through folly, I kept him through charity; but bitter cause, indeed, have I to repent my indiscretion in this particular, for I have discovered that this wretched creature, though he neither knows how to speak or write, yet by the force of impudence and cunning, and by means of a false key to my till, has been able to corrupt many of my domestics, to sow the most virulent animosities amongst others, and to blacken my reputation with numbers of credulous and simple people. Some of my servants he has persuaded (by infusing groundless fears and jealousies into their minds) to put on orange liveries, and to threaten death and destruction to the

* Edward Cooke.

rest; those others again, by similar misrepresentations, he has induced to array themselves in green, and to commit the most horrible excesses; and others he has actually and openly paid with my own money, to aggravate and perpetuate the quarrels between the two former; but this is a mere prelude to the remainder of his plan, for I have discovered that this complicated system of vice and treachery has been adopted merely for the purpose of compelling me to marry Mr. Bull; and this contemptible wretch has had within these few days the presumption to avow to me all his enormities, and to tell me that he has so impaired my means, blasted my character, and exasperated my family, that I have no resource but in the match; nay, he has actually been base enough to publish an advertisement, informing all my friends that I have been debauched by Mr. Bull, through his procurement, and lived in a state of gross prostitution with him for many years past. If this were true, need I comment on the treachery of disclosing the past, and the meanness of proposing the future connection?

But, Sir, conceive, I beg of you, the ridiculousness of this overture. I to marry Mr. Bull!—Mr. Bull whom in the year 1783, when he was tolerably vigorous and reasonably wealthy and well reputed, I would have rejected with contempt!—Mr. Bull, now that he has had repeated fits of the falling sickness, and that a commission of bankrupts is ready to issue against him! I could not have believed the proposal serious, if the old gentleman himself had not gravely avowed it. Hear, I beg of you, the inducements which he holds out to me. There is to be no cohabitation, for we are still to continue to live on different sides of the water—no reduction of expenses, for our separate establishments are to be kept up—all

my servants to be paid by me, but to take their orders from him—the entire profits of my trade to be subjected to his management, and applied in discharge of his debts—my family estates to be assigned to him without any settlement being made on me or my issue, or any provision for the event of a separation. He tells me at the same time that I am to reap great advantages, the particulars of which he does not think proper to disclose, and that in the meantime I must agree to the match, and that a settlement shall hereafter be drawn up agreeably to his directions, and by his lawyers. This, you will say, is rather an extraordinary *carte blanche*, from an insolvent gentleman, past his grand climacteric, to a handsome young woman of good character and easy circumstances. But this is not all; the pride of the negotiation is equal to its dishonesty; for, though I am beset and assailed in private, and threatened with actual force if I do not consent to this unnatural alliance, yet, in order to save the feelings of the Bull family, and to afford a pretext for an inadequate settlement, I am desired, in despite of all maidenly precedent, to make the first public advances, and to supplicate as a boon that he will gratify my amorous desires, and condescend to receive me and my appurtenances under his protection. Still one of the principal features of this odious transaction remains to be detailed; would you believe it, that this old sinner, several years ago, married a lady,* who, though of harsh features and slender fortune, was of honourable parentage and good character, and who is, at this hour, alive, and treated by him with every mark of slight and contumely, and it is worthy of observation that many of the clauses in the articles, which were very carefully drawn up,

* Scotland.

previous to his marriage with this lady, have been scandalously violated by him. . . . The truth is, I am determined to live and die a maiden, and I now apply to you merely for advice as to what is the most effectual method of protecting myself in that resolution. If my object was merely to get rid of Bull, the shortest way would be to marry him, as such an unnatural union must very soon end in separation and divorce, but I have no such view; for, ill as I have been treated, I have no wish to break off all connection with an old acquaintance and relation, neither will I listen to the advice of those who bid me get into a passion and break Bull's windows, and tar and feather my shop-boy, (though I confess this latter part holds out strong inducements.) On the whole I am convinced, that the true line of conduct for me to adopt, is a firm and a temperate one. I will resolutely reject the proposed match, and let my kinsman see the wickedness and folly of it. I will appeal to him and his friends against the frenzy of his clerk; and above all I will lay my grievances before our head-landlord, who has been always just and gracious to me, and I will rely on him for full protection. But if after all the Bulls will not suffer me to live on friendly terms with them, and will still persist in their dishonest practices in my family, I will turn out their adherents (whom I well know); and, in all events, I will restore my shop-boy to his original rags and insignificance, and send him to the place from whence he came. I will re-establish harmony amongst all those who should naturally be my friends, and if the Bulls should attempt to offer me any insolence, I trust I shall be able to repel force by force.

I am, Sir,

Your afflicted but determined humble servant,

SHEELAGH.

Such desultory attacks, however brilliant, produced but little effect on the Government, who moved steadily to their object. On the 22nd day of January, 1799, Lord Cornwallis opened a new session with a speech from the throne, which was concluded in the following words :—

The more I have reflected on the situation and circumstances, considering, on the one hand, the strength and stability of Great Britain, and, on the other, those divisions which have shaken Ireland to its foundations, the more anxious I am for some permanent adjustment which may extend the advantages enjoyed by our sister kingdom to every part of this island. The unremitting industry with which our enemies persevere in their avowed design of endeavouring to effect a separation of this kingdom from Great Britain, must have engaged your particular attention, and his Majesty commands me to express his anxious hope that this consideration, joined to the sentiment of mutual affection and common interest, may dispose the Parliaments in both kingdoms to provide the most effectual means of maintaining and improving a connexion essential to their common security, and to consolidate, as far as possible, into one firm and lasting fabric, the strength, the power, and the resources of the British empire.*

Before the address was moved a conversation took place on a point raised by George Ponsonby, as to whether Lord Castlereagh could be permitted to sit in the House, not having returned to

* *Collectanea Politica*, vol. iii. p. 481.

his constituents since he had accepted office. The objection was, however, waived, as the members did not appear disposed to spend much time on it. Lord Tyrone moved the address, which was, of course, an echo of the speech. Thus was ushered in the first great debate on the Union—it lasted nearly a day and a night: the House began its sittings at one o'clock on the afternoon of the 22nd, and did not rise until eleven o'clock the next morning.

The first speaker on the opposition side was Sir John Parnell; next came Mr. Tighe, of Wicklow. He objected to the address as an Unionist document, but was assured by Lord Castlereagh that it was not intended to pledge the House to anything beyond giving the measure a fair hearing. George Ponsonby followed in a long and very able speech, in which he dissected the conduct of Government as to the manner in which the question had been brought forward; nearly a dozen good speeches followed against the Union, of which FitzGerald's (the late prime sergeant's) was the ablest. The only one which I shall call particular attention to, is that of Mr. (afterwards Sir) Jonah Barrington. His speech, though rather exaggerated, was clever and telling, and he was very bold in denouncing the measures by which the minister was seeking

to achieve a majority; he almost in terms accused Lord Castlereagh of bribery, and was called to order by Mr. Corry (Chancellor of the Exchequer), and immediately afterwards by Mr. Beresford, who, in rather a bullying manner, threatened to move that Mr. Barrington's words should be taken down. Plunket then interfered; he said,—

I have no idea that the freedom of debate shall be controlled by such frequent interruptions. I do not conceive that my honourable friend is out of order, and when my turn comes to speak, I shall repeat these charges in still stronger language, if possible, and indulge gentlemen at the other side of the House with an opportunity of taking down my words if they have any fancy to do so.

Mr. Barrington then proceeded for some time without interruption, but on his making use of the expression—"Is it not well known that there are votes in this House influenced by the Minister?" Mr. Corry moved formally that the words should be taken down. Plunket observed shortly, that "if they were taken down the House would be committed to an inquiry into the truth of the allegation," and the motion was not pressed. Up to this time only four members had spoken for the measure (St. George Daly, the notorious Sir Boyle Roche, the Knight of Kerry, and Sir John Blaquiere), and none of them had at all checked the victorious progress of the opposition speakers.

At last Castlereagh rose; as his speech contained all that was said with effect in favour of the Union side, and as Plunket replied to him, I shall give a short summary of it: its language was in the style of all his speeches in the Irish House—a mixture of dislocated arguments, broken metaphors, and cold hard sneers; a style which was nevertheless made telling from the abrupt inevitable force with which unpleasant truths were put. Lord Castlereagh said—

He trusted that no man would decide on a measure of such importance as that in part before the House on private or personal motives; for if a decision were thus to be influenced, it would be the most unfortunate that could ever affect the country. What was the object of this measure but such as every loyal man, who really loved his country, must feel the strongest attachment to? By an incorporation of our legislature with that of Great Britain, it would not only consolidate the strength and glory of the empire, but it would change our internal and local government to a system of strength and calm security, instead of being a garrison in the island. Here was but a part of many and numerous advantages, which the stage of the business did not then render necessary to be entered into, and which would come more suitably at a future period. As to the argument of the Parliament's incompetency to entertain the question, he did not expect to hear such an argument from constitutional lawyers, or to hear advanced the position, that a legislature was not at all times competent to do that for which it could only have been instituted—the adoption

of the best means to promote the general happiness and prosperity. After the melancholy state to which this country had been reduced, his Majesty's ministers would feel that they abdicated their duty to the empire, if they did not seriously consider that state, and adopt the best remedy for the evils which it comprised. It was the misfortune of this country to have in it no fixed principles on which the human mind could rest—no one standard to which the different prejudices of the country could be accommodated. What was the price of connection at present with Great Britain? A military establishment far beyond our natural means to support, and for which we are indebted to Great Britain, who is also obliged to guarantee our public loans. It is not by flattery that the country could be saved—truths, however disagreeable, must be told—and if Ireland did not boldly look her situation in the face and accept that union which would strengthen and secure her, she would, perhaps, have no alternative but to sink into the embrace of French fraternity. You talk, said his lordship, of national pride and independence, but where is the solidity of this boast? You have not the British constitution—nor can you have it consistently with your present species of connection with Great Britain: that constitution does not recognize two separate and independent legislatures under one crown—the greater country must lead—the lesser naturally follow, and must be practically subordinate in imperial concerns; but this necessary and beneficial operation of the general will must be preceded by establishing one common interest.

As the pride of this country advances with her wealth, it may happen that you will not join Great Britain in her wars—it is only a common polity that will make that certain. Incorporate with Great Britain, and

you have a common interest and common means. If Great Britain calls for your subjection, resist it; but if she wishes to unite with you on terms of equality, 'tis madness not to accept the offer.

All questions have arguments on both sides, but the least evils are to be chosen.

It is objected that the legislature will not be local. 'Tis for that reason the measure is adopted, for with a local legislature and the present division of your people, you can't go on.

Absentees—another objection—they would be somewhat increased, no doubt, but this evil would be compensated by other advantages, and, amongst others, by the growth of an intermediate class of men between the landlord and the peasant—a class whose loss is felt in Ireland—to train the mind of the lower class; these we should have from England.

Plunket immediately followed. Some who witnessed the effect of this his first great parliamentary effort, although they often afterwards heard his most famous speeches in the British House of Commons, still always insisted that at no other time did he produce an effect so deep and strange. When he began to speak it was between six and seven o'clock on the morning of the 23rd of January, and the uncertain light of a wintry daybreak fell upon his broad and massive face, pale as ever, but then deeply marked by the traces of intense thought and long and painful excitement. His powerful frame heaved from his

efforts to suppress the terrible emotions within; and when his strong metallic voice rang out with words of awful warning and denunciation, all other sounds in the House were hushed into death-like silence.

Sir, I shall make no apology for troubling you at this late hour, exhausted though I am in mind and body, and suffering though you must be under a similar pressure. This is a subject which must arouse the slumbering, and might almost reanimate the dead. It is a question whether Ireland shall cease to be free. It is a question involving our dearest interests and for ever.

Sir, I congratulate the House on the manly temper with which this measure has been discussed: I congratulate them on the victory, which I already see they have obtained: a victory which I anticipate from the bold and generous sentiments that have been expressed on this side of the house, and which I see confirmed in the doleful and discomfited faces of the miserable group whom I see before me. Sir, I congratulate you on the candid avowal of the noble lord who has just sat down. He has exposed this project in its naked hideousness and deformity. He has told us that the necessity of sacrificing our independence flows from the nature of our connexion. It is now avowed that this measure does not flow from any temporary cause; that it is not produced in consequence of any late rebellion, or accidental disturbance in the country; that its necessity does not arise from the danger of modern political innovations, nor from recent attempts of wicked men to separate this country from Great Britain. No; we are now informed by the noble lord, that the condition of our slavery is engrafted on the principle of our con-

nexion, and that, by the decrees of fate, Ireland has been doomed a dependent colony from her cradle.

I trust that after this barefaced avowal there can be little difference of opinion. I trust that every honest man who regards the freedom of Ireland, or who regards the connexion with England, will, by his vote on this night, refute this unfounded and seditious doctrine. Good God, sir, have I borne arms to crush the wretches who propagated the false and wicked creed, "that British connexion was hostile to Irish freedom," and am I now bound to combat it, coming from the lips of the noble lord who is at the head of our administration?

But, sir, in answer to the assertion of the noble lord, I will quote the authority of the Duke of Portland, in his speech from the throne, at the end of the session, 1782, "that the two kingdoms are now one, indissoluble, connected by unity of constitution and unity of interest; that the danger and security, the prosperity and calamity, of the one must mutually affect the other; that they stand and fall together." I will quote the authority of the King, Lords, and Commons of Ireland, who asserted and established the constitution of our independent parliament founded on that connexion; and the authority of the King, Lords, and Commons of Great Britain, who adopted and confirmed it. With as little prospect of persuasion has the noble lord cited to us the example of Scotland; and as little am I tempted to purchase, at the expense of two bloody rebellions, a state of poverty and vassalage, at which Ireland, at her worst state, before she attained a free trade or a free constitution, would have spurned.

But, sir, the noble lord does not seem to repose very implicit confidence in his own arguments, and he amuses you by saying, that in adopting this address you do not

pledge yourselves to a support of the measure in any future stage. Beware of this delusion. If you adopt this address, you sacrifice your constitution. You concede the principle, and any future inquiries can only be as to the terms. For them you need entertain no solicitude, on the terms you can never disagree. Give up your independence, and Great Britain will grant you whatever terms you desire. Give her the key, and she will confide everything to its protection. There are no advantages you can ask which she will not grant, exactly for the same reason that the unprincipled spendthrift will subscribe, without reading it, the bond which he has no intention of ever discharging. I say, therefore, that if you ever mean to make a stand for the liberties of Ireland, now, and now only, is the moment for doing it.

But, sir, the freedom of discussion which has taken place on this side of the House has, it seems, given great offence to gentlemen on the Treasury bench. They are men of nice and punctilious honour, and they will not endure that anything should be said which implies a reflection on their untainted and virgin integrity. They threatened to take down the words of an honourable gentleman who spoke before me, because they conveyed an insinuation; and I promised them on that occasion, that if the fancy for taking down words continued, I would indulge them in it to the top of their bent. Sir, I am determined to keep my word with them, and I now will not insinuate, but I will directly assert, that base and wicked as is the object proposed, the means used to effect it have been more flagitious and abominable.

Do you choose to take down my words? Do you dare me to the proof?

Sir, I had been induced to think that we had at the head of the executive government of this country a

plain, honest soldier, unaccustomed to, and disdaining the intrigues of politics, and who, as an additional evidence of the directness and purity of his views, had chosen for his secretary a simple and modest youth, *ingenui vultus puer ingenuique pudoris*, whose inexperience was the voucher of his innocence; and yet I will be bold to say, that during the vice-royalty of this unspotted veteran, and during the administration of this unassuming stripling—within these last six weeks, a system of black corruption has been carried on within the walls of the Castle which would disgrace the annals of the worst period of the history of either country.

Do you choose to take down my words?

I need call no witness to your bar to prove them. I see two right honourable gentlemen sitting within your walls, who had long and faithfully served the crown, and who have been dismissed, because they dared to express a sentiment in favour of the freedom of their country. I see another honourable gentleman, who has been forced to resign his place as commissioner of the revenue because he refused to co-operate in this dirty job of a dirty administration.

Do you dare to deny this?

I say that at this moment the threat of dismissal from office is suspended over the heads of the members who now sit around me, in order to influence their votes on the question of this night, involving everything that can be sacred or dear to man.

Do you desire to take down my words? Utter the desire, and I will prove the truth of them at your bar.

Sir, I would warn you against the consequences of carrying this measure by such means as this, but that I see the necessary defeat of it in the honest and universal indignation which the adoption of such means excites.

I see the protection against the wickedness of the plan in the imbecility of its execution; and I congratulate my country that, when a design was formed against her liberties, the prosecution of it was entrusted to such hands as it is now placed in.

The example of the Prime Minister of England, imitable in its vices, may deceive the noble lord. The Minister of England has his faults. He abandoned in his latter years the principle of reform, by professing which he had attained the early confidence of the people of England, and in the whole of his political conduct he has shown himself haughty and intractable; but it must be admitted that he is endowed by nature with a towering and transcendent intellect, and that the vastness of his resources keeps pace with the magnificence and unboundedness of his projects. I thank God that it is much more easy for him to transfer his apostacy and his insolence than his comprehension and his sagacity; and I feel the safety of my country in the wretched feebleness of her enemy. I cannot fear that the constitution which has been founded by the wisdom of sages, and cemented by the blood of patriots and of heroes, is to be smitten to its centre by such a green and sapless twig as this.

Sir, the noble lord has shown much surprise that he should hear a doubt expressed concerning the competence of Parliament to do this act. I am sorry that I also must contribute to increase the surprise of the noble lord. If I mistake not, his surprise will be much augmented before this question shall be disposed of; he shall see and hear what he has never before seen or heard, and be made acquainted with sentiments to which, probably, his heart has been a stranger.

Sir, I, in the most express terms, deny the competency of Parliament to do this act. I warn you, do not dare

to lay your hands on the constitution. I tell you, that if, circumstanced as you are, you pass this Act, it will be a nullity, and that no man in Ireland will be bound to obey it. I make the assertion deliberately—I repeat it, and I call on any man who hears me to take down my words. You have not been elected for this purpose. You are appointed to make laws, and not legislatures. You are appointed to act under the constitution, not to alter it. You are appointed to exercise the functions of legislators, and not to transfer them. And if you do so your act is a dissolution of the government. You resolve society into its original elements, and no man in the land is bound to obey you.

Sir, I state doctrines which are not merely founded in the immutable laws of justice and of truth. I state not merely the opinions of the ablest men who have written on the science of government, but I state the practice of our constitution as settled at the era of the revolution, and I state the doctrine under which the house of Hanover derives its title to the throne. Has the King a right to transfer his crown? Is he competent to annex it to the crown of Spain or any other country? No—but he may abdicate it, and every man who knows the constitution knows the consequence; the right reverts to the next in succession—if they all abdicate, it reverts to the people. The man who questions this doctrine, in the same breath must arraign the sovereign on the throne as an usurper. Are you competent to transfer your legislative rights to the French council of five hundred? Are you competent to transfer them to the British Parliament? I answer, No. When you transfer you abdicate, and the great original trust reverts to the people from whom it issued. Yourselves you may extinguish, but Parliament you cannot extinguish. It is enthroned in the hearts

of the people. It is enshrined in the sanctuary of the constitution. It is immortal as the island which it protects. As well might the frantic suicide hope that the act which destroys his miserable body should extinguish his eternal soul. Again, I therefore warn you, do not dare to lay your hands on the constitution; it is above your power.

Sir, I do not say that the Parliament and the people, by mutual consent and co-operation, may not change the form of the constitution. Whenever such a case arises it must be decided on its own merits—but that is not this case. If government considers this a season peculiarly fitted for experiments on the constitution, they may call on the people. I ask you, are you ready to do so? Are you ready to abide the event of such an appeal? What is it you must, in that event, submit to the people? Not this particular project; for if you dissolve the present form of government, they become free to choose any other—you fling them to the fury of the tempest—you must call on them to unhouse themselves of the established constitution, and to fashion to themselves another. I ask again, is this the time for an experiment of that nature? Thank God, the people have manifested no such wish—so far as they have spoken, their voice is decidedly against this daring innovation. You know that no voice has been uttered in its favour, and you cannot be infatuated enough to take confidence from the silence which prevails in some parts of the kingdom: if you know how to appreciate that silence, it is more formidable than the most clamorous opposition—you may be rived and shivered by the lightning before you hear the peal of the thunder!

But, sir, we are told that we should discuss this question with calmness and composure. I am called on to

surrender my birthright and my honour, and I am told I should be calm and should be composed. National pride! Independence of our country! These, we are told by the Minister, are only vulgar topics fitted for the meridian of the mob, but unworthy to be mentioned to such an enlightened assembly as this; they are trinkets and gewgaws fit to catch the fancy of childish and unthinking people like you, sir, or like your predecessor in that chair, but utterly unworthy the consideration of this House, or of the matured understanding of the noble lord who condescends to instruct it! Gracious God! We see a Pery re-ascending from the tomb, and raising his awful voice to warn us against the surrender of our freedom, and we see that the proud and virtuous feelings which warmed the breast of that aged and venerable man are only calculated to excite the contempt of this young philosopher, who has been transplanted from the nursery to the cabinet to outrage the feelings and understanding of the country.

But, sir, I will be schooled, and I will endeavour to argue this question as calmly and frigidly as I am desired to do; and since we are told that this is a measure intended for our benefit, and that it is through mere kindness to us that all these extraordinary means have been resorted to, I will beg to ask, how are we to be benefited? Is it commercial benefit that we are to obtain? I will not detain the House with a minute detail on this part of the subject. It has been fully discussed by able men, and it is well known that we are already possessed of everything material which could be desired in that respect. But I shall submit some obvious considerations.

I waive the consideration that, under any union of legislatures, the conditions as to trade between the two

countries must be, either free ports, which would be ruinous to Ireland; or equal duties, which would be ruinous to Ireland; or the present duties made perpetual, which would be ruinous to Ireland; or that the duties must be left open to regulation from time to time by the united Parliament, which would leave us at the mercy of Great Britain. I will waive the consideration, that the Minister has not thought fit to tell us what we are to get, and, what is still stronger, that no man amongst us has any definite idea of what we are to ask; and I will content myself with putting this question—Is your commerce in such a declining, desperate state, that you are obliged to resort to irrevocable measures in order to restore it? Or is it at the very moment when it is advancing with rapid prosperity, beyond all example and above all hope—is it, I say, at such a time that you think it wise to bring your constitution to market and offer it for sale, in order to obtain advantages the aid of which you do not require, and of the nature of which you have not any definite idea.

A word more, and I have done as to commerce. Supposing great advantages were to be obtained, and that they were stipulated for and specified; what is your security that the stipulation will be observed? Is it the faith of treaties? What treaty more solemn than the final constitutional treaty between the two kingdoms in 1782, which you are now called upon to violate? Is it not a mockery to say that the Parliament of Ireland is competent to annul itself, and to destroy the original compact with the people and the final compact of 1782, and that the Parliament of the empire will not be competent to annul any commercial regulation made by the articles of Union? And here, sir, I take leave of this part of the question; indeed, it is only justice to Govern-

ment to acknowledge that they do not much rely on the commercial benefits to be obtained by the Union—they have been rather held out in the way of innocent artifice, to delude the people for their own good; but the real objects are different, though still merely for the advantage of Ireland.

What are those other objects? To prevent the recurrence of rebellion, and to put an end to domestic dissensions? Give me leave to ask, sir, how was the rebellion excited? I will not inquire into its remote causes; I do not wish to revive unpleasant recollections, or to say anything which might be considered as invidious to the Government of the country; but how was it immediately excited? By the agency of a party of levellers, actuated by French principles, instigated by French intrigues, and supported by the promise of French co-operation. This party, I hesitate not to say, was in itself contemptible. How did it become formidable? By operating on the wealthy, well-informed, and moral inhabitants of the north, and persuading them that they had no constitution; and by instilling palatable poisons into the minds of the rabble of the south; which were prepared to receive them by being in a state of utter ignorance and wretchedness. How will an Union affect those pre-disposing causes? Will you conciliate the mind of the northern by caricaturing all the defects of the constitution, and then extinguishing it, by exhausting his wealth to supply the contributions levied by an imperial Parliament, and by outraging all his religious and moral feelings by the means which you use to accomplish this abominable project; and will you not, by encouraging the drain of absentees, and taking away the influence and example of resident gentlemen, do everything in your power to aggravate the poverty,

and to sublimate the ignorance and bigotry of the south?

Let me ask again, how was the rebellion put down? By the zeal and loyalty of the gentlemen of Ireland rallying round—what? a reed shaken by the winds; a wretched apology for a Minister, who neither knew how to give nor where to seek protection? No! but round the laws and constitution and independence of the country. What were the affections and motives that called us into action? To protect our families, our properties, and our liberties. What were the antipathies by which we were excited? Our abhorrence of French principles and French ambition. What was it to us that France was a republic? I rather rejoiced when I saw the ancient despotism of France put down. What was it to us that she dethroned her monarch? I admired the virtues and wept for the sufferings of the man; but as a nation it affected us not. The reason I took up arms, and am ready still to bear them against France, is because she intruded herself upon our domestic concerns—because with the rights of man and the love of freedom on her tongue, I see that she has the lust of dominion in her heart—because wherever she has placed her foot, she has erected her throne; and to be her friend or her ally is to be her tributary and her slave.

Let me ask, is the present conduct of the British Minister calculated to augment or to transfer that antipathy? No, sir, I will be bold to say, that licentious and impious France, in all the unrestrained excesses which anarchy and atheism have given birth to, has not committed a more insidious act against her enemy than is now attempted by the professed champion of civilized Europe against a friend and an ally in the hour of her calamity and distress—at a moment when our country is

filled with British troops—when the loyal men of Ireland are fatigued with their exertions to put down rebellion; efforts in which they had succeeded before these troops arrived—whilst our Habeas Corpus Act is suspended—whilst trials by court-martial are carrying on in many parts of the kingdom—whilst the people are taught to think that they have no right to meet or to deliberate, and whilst the great body of them are so palsied by their fears, and worn down by their exertions, that even this vital question is scarcely able to rouse them from their lethargy—at the moment when we are distracted by domestic dissensions—dissensions artfully kept alive as the pretext for our present subjugation and the instrument of our future thraldom!

Sir, I beg that I may not be misunderstood when I said that ungenerous advantage was taken of the moment when British troops were in this country. I did not mean to impute this base motive to the British people or the British soldier; on the contrary, I am convinced that they were sent here from a most friendly wish to protect this kingdom, and that they came and continue here with the same honourable and affectionate views. I respect the British soldier; I received him as a friend and an ally, and as such I respect and esteem him, and I feel assured that he never would raise his sword to stab the liberties of Ireland, for he knows that the life-blood of England must issue through the wound. I acquit the people of Great Britain from all share in this base transaction. I am satisfied it would be rendered finally abortive by their wisdom and patriotism, even if we were wanting to ourselves. I consider it merely as the project of a desperate Minister, who feels that he may be called to a severe account by his country at no very distant period, and would enable himself to say

"True, I have deluded and impoverished you, but in return I have subdued Ireland; there she lies fettered at your feet, use her as you please."

Yet, sir, I thank administration for this measure. They are, without intending it, putting an end to our dissensions—through this black cloud which they have collected over us, I see the light breaking in upon this unfortunate country. They have composed our dissensions—not by fomenting the embers of a lingering and subdued rebellion — not by hallooing the Protestant against the Catholic and the Catholic against the Protestant—not by committing the north against the south—not by inconsistent appeals to local or to party prejudices; no—but by the avowal of this atrocious conspiracy against the liberties of Ireland, they have subdued every petty and subordinate distinction. They have united every rank and description of men by the pressure of this grand and momentous subject; and I tell them that they will see every honest and independent man in Ireland rally round her constitution, and merge every other consideration in his opposition to this ungenerous and odious measure. For my own part, I will resist it to the last gasp of my existence and with the last drop of my blood, and when I feel the hour of my dissolution approaching, I will, like the father of Hannibal, take my children to the altar and swear them to eternal hostility against the invaders of their country's freedom.

Sir, I shall not detain you by pursuing this question through the topics which it so abundantly offers. I shall be proud to think my name may be handed down to posterity in the same roll with those disinterested patriots who have successfully resisted the enemies of their country. Successfully I trust it will be. In all

events, I have my exceeding great reward; I shall bear in my heart the consciousness of having done my duty, and in the hour of death I shall not be haunted by the reflection that I have basely sold or meanly abandoned the liberties of my native land. Can every man who gives his vote on the other side this night lay his hand upon his heart and make the same declaration? I hope so. It will be well for his own peace. The indignation and abhorrence of his countrymen will not accompany him through life, and the curses of his children will not follow him to his grave.

This was the great speech of the night; several other speakers followed, the Opposition having greatly the advantage in ability, as well as in the number of their supporters. At last in the division on Mr. Ponsonby's amendment the Government had a majority of one.

CHAPTER IV.

POLITICAL DUELLING CLUBS—MR. PITT'S ARGUMENTS FOR AN UNION —LAST DEBATE ON THE—SIR BOYLE ROCHE—AMENDMENT TO THE UNION ADDRESS—SPEECH AGAINST THE UNION—REPLY OF ST. GEORGE DALY—PLUNKET AND CASTLEREAGH—LAST WORDS AGAINST THE UNION.

THE debate of the 23rd January, 1799, was renewed on the report of the address two days afterwards;—when Sir Laurence Parsons moved as an amendment that the paragraph relating to the Union should be expunged. The House continued its sitting until near the noon of the following day; when on a division the Government was beaten by a majority of five. Plunket does not appear to have taken any part in this debate, and as the arguments employed were nearly the same as on the 22nd and 23rd, I shall not enter into them, further than to say that Castlereagh's speech on the latter occasion was plainly intended as an answer to Plunket's terrible philippic, and that he seems to have thought it necessary to assume a more violent and imperious tone.

He concluded with the following general cartel:—

I reprobate the personalities used by gentlemen in the course of the debates which take place on this subject. I deprecate a contest of this nature, but if any gentleman conceives himself injured by any gentleman on this side of the House, there is a remedy for wounded honour, which they will not find it difficult to obtain.

These words seem to afford a curious confirmation of the strange story told by Sir Jonah Barrington, of the duelling clubs proposed respectively by the Unionists and their opponents. Sir Jonah describes a dinner given by Lord Castlereagh, at his house in Merrion Street, at which were entertained above eighty of his most staunch friends, consisting of "tried men," and men of "fighting families," who might feel an individual pride in resenting every personality of the opposition, and in identifying their own honour with that of the Government. When the wine had been sufficiently circulated, the great question of the evening was skilfully introduced by Sir John Blaquiere (since Lord de Blaquiere),—

who of all men was best calculated to promote a gentlemanly convivial fighting conspiracy. Having sent round many loyal, mingled with joyous and exhilarating, toasts, he stated that he understood the Opposition were disposed to personal unkindness, or even incivilities

towards his Majesty's best friends, the Unionists of Ireland. He was determined that no man should advance upon him, by degrading the party he had adopted and the measure he was pledged to support. A full bumper proved his sincerity—the subject was discussed with great glee, and some of the company began to feel a zeal for 'active service.' It was also proposed before they broke up that there should be a dinner for twenty or thirty every day in one of the committee chambers, where they could be always at hand to make up a house, or for any *emergency* which should call for an unexpected reinforcement during any part of the discussion. The novel idea of such a detachment of legislators was considered whimsical and humourous, and of course was not rejected. . . . After much wit and many flashes of convivial bravery, the meeting separated after midnight, fully resolved to eat, drink, speak, and fight for Lord Castlereagh. They so far kept their words that the supporters of Union indisputably showed more personal spirit than their opponents during the session.

Sir Jonah professes to have had this story on the morning after the dinner from one of the company, and he goes on to describe the opposition meeting which was held at Charlemont House on the following day. He assures us that when the plan reported to have been resolved upon by the Castle party was explained, it was hotly contended by some that the partisans of Government should be taken at their words, and that the measure of the legislative Union should be sub-

mitted to the ordeal of battle, and discussed, not in speeches in the Parliament House, but with pistols in "the fifteen acres." *

Ministers having been beaten by a majority of five on the 24th of January, Lord Castlereagh moved on the 28th for an adjournment until the 7th of February, no doubt for the purpose of obtaining further instructions from England. This was regarded by the more sanguine of the opposition as a sign of yielding on the part of the Government. But it is now quite evident that from first to last the Minister never flinched from his purpose (see *Cornwallis Correspondence*, vol. iii. *passim*). Mr. Pitt had in the meantime made his great speech in the English House, in which he exhausted the whole question. He met the argument that Parliament was incapable of abdicating its powers without a direct appeal to the people on the question, by charging those who held such language with Jacobinism. He then went on to argue that some radical change was necessary in order to effect any improvement in this country. He said,—

The evils and calamities with which Ireland is afflicted lie deep in the situation of the country; they

* This name was given to a portion of the Phœnix Park near Dublin, a favorite resort of duellists. An old story is told in Dublin of an attorney who challenged a brother practitioner to meet him "on the fifteen acres, *be the same more or less.*"

are to be attributed to the manners of the inhabitants—to the state of society—to the habits of the people at large —to the unequal distribution of property—to the want of civilized intercourse—to the discord of party—to the prejudices of religious sects.

He argued that no substantial changes could be expected from a local Parliament, which was to some extent committed to the existing system. He next considered the transactions of 1782, said that concessions were then unwarily made to curry popular favour; that they had left the two countries with independent Parliaments, but with clashing interests. He illustrated the dangers of such an arrangement by the circumstances that attended the debates in both Parliaments on the question of the Regency in '89, when an actual collision was only avoided by an accident, namely, the recovery of the King. He went on to say, that similar disagreements might arise on questions of peace or war, and that at the moment of crisis the arm of the empire might be paralyzed. He concluded thus :—

> There is no circumstance of probable difficulty, no idea of the loss of popularity, no personal consideration, however weighty, that can prevent me from using every exertion, every effort in my power to accomplish a measure which in my firm conviction tends to promote the happiness of the people of Ireland.

But though the Government were resolved to

carry the measure, they found it necessary to bide their time, and the question was not again agitated until the 15th of May. During the interim, Mr. Plunket took but little part in the business of Parliament. On almost the only occasion on which his name occurs, we find him exhibiting his liberal sympathies on religious subjects in seconding a motion made by Mr. Fitzgerald (late prime sergeant) for a committee to inquire into the condition of unbeneficed Presbyterian clergymen, with a view to ameliorating it.

The last debate bearing on the Union in this session took place on the occasion of Mr. M. Mason moving, on the 15th of May, that the speaker should issue a writ for the return of a member for Kilmallock, in the room of Mr. C. S. Oliver, who had accepted the escheatorship of Munster, an office which in Ireland corresponded to that of the Chiltern Hundreds in England.

Mr. Dawson (Opposition) wished to make no objection to the issuing of the writ as moved for, but wanted to know from Lord Castlereagh "why the escheatorship of Munster had been refused to Colonel Cole, when he had been ordered to join his regiment abroad." Lord Castlereagh made no reply, a silence which was explained by Mr. St. George Daly, who said that the granting of the escheatorship was a right of the Crown, which it was within

the prerogative to refuse, and that Lord Castlereagh would be wanting in his duty if he condescended to give any explanation as to the manner in which that right was exercised. An animated debate ensued, in which Mr. Plunket, according to a newspaper report, spoke as follows :—

Sir, I think that the question put to the noble lord by my honourable friend (Mr. Dawson), was put with such candour and moderation, that it merited a respectful answer, instead of being treated, as it has been, with contemptuous silence. But as I find that the noble lord has yielded to the all-powerful and eloquent injunction of his learned friend the prime serjeant (Mr. St. George Daly), I am justified in supposing that no answer could have been given, but such as would confirm the house in an opinion of the justness of the observations made by my honourable friend.

But what stuff, sir, does the noble lord think this house and the country made of, that they should bear with such contemptuous silence—with a treatment so insulting? It has been said that the question of Union ought not to have been introduced into the discussion; but I must say, that the question before the house is intimately connected with that of a legislative Union because the noble lord is making use of the prerogative of the crown as a means and instrument of filling the benches of this house with the supporters of his favourite measure.

Baffled in this house at the time that the question of Union was openly brought forward, administration have now recourse to other modes; and every little mean artifice and agency is made use of indirectly to attain

those ends which the Minister wants only the mockery of an artificial majority in Parliament to sanction in order then to enforce.

Sir, how has the measure of Union been introduced into this house? Have the inducements of office been held out to any member on this side of it? Have the old and faithful servants of the crown been dismissed and their places pointed to in order to tempt the integrity of political virtue? Have bribery and corruption been resorted to for the purpose of making that majority which the unbiassed play of honest principle would never make? Sir, let the Minister answer, for he is one of those who can best tell; but thus much, sir, I will say, that nor place, nor power, nor bribery, nor corruption influenced any man who voted against the Minister's measure, but in the strength of honest principle was it rejected.

The true sense of Parliament has been declared; it is manifest to the world. The unbought sense of Parliament has been declared; and that virtue which protected the independence of this house and of this kingdom, will again save it, should any Ministry foolishly and wickedly persist in hostility against them. I would then warn the noble lord how he again attempts the liberties of his country. I would warn the noble lord to profit by the experience which he has already had, and not court another defeat and another shame. I would warn that Minister who exhibits a political phenomenon in this house—who, contrary to every precedent, after having failed in measures odious to his country, odious to Parliament, and injurious to his sovereign, yet retains his place and has not sought refuge from public notice in private situation. I would warn him not to persist in his destructive course; or continue to urge a measure which the people of Ireland

never will accept; and which, if forced on them, will, to use the noble lord's own words, be the most rash, fatal, and unfortunate conduct, that ever has been adopted by any Minister?

Sir, it is meanly and insidiously attempted to impute motives of personal interest to gentlemen at this side of the House, for the part they have taken on the question of the legislative Union. The odium of corrupt motives is attempted to be divided; but I will ask—Is there one instance—one solitary instance that can be pointed out?

["Yes," said Mr. Martin from the other side of the house.]

Let me hear that name then.

Here Mr. Martin cried out that he was ready. But he was stopped by a general exclamation of "Shame, shame!" and a cry of "Proceed!" addressed to Mr. Plunket.

I waited, Mr. Speaker, to hear the solitary name of him who on this side of the house in opposing the Union had acted on any motive of interest, save that which he felt in common with his country. I have heard of 116 placemen and pensioners; I will not say whether any of these voted for it, but I am sure if any independent gentleman has given his support to the measure, he has been betrayed into that support by circumstances, acting not on his conviction, but on those temporary feelings which they have excited; and, sir, I hail, as most propitious to the freedom of this country, the successes of his Majesty's allies on the Continent; because, I hope they will lead to a speedy peace. When fears of invasion and rebellion are removed, I am sure there will not be found a single independent gentleman in this country to support the Minister in this abominable measure.

Sir, I have heard the opposers of Union, branded

also with the name of faction. But who are they who form this faction? It is they who have put down rebellion. It is these men who, even in the young memory of a young Minister, have saved this country, and to whom it is owing, that the connexion between it and Great Britain subsists at this moment.

Sir, it is a fact, and I speak it under correction of the noble lord if I am wrong, that he has said that none shall vacate their seats in this house, whose successors will not support the measure of a Union. And it is another fact, sir, which the Minister may contradict if he can, that in almost every instance since the commencement of the present session, the escheatorship of Munster has been given to members whose only qualification for the office has been, that their successors were conditioned to vote for an Union. This condition the honourable colonel, whose case has given rise to the present discussion, would not, could not make for his successor. On the contrary, it was known that his intended successor was one who, like himself, loved the free constitution of Ireland, and therefore it was that the colonel was refused, and the escheatorship of Munster for the first time converted into an instrument of prerogative, injurious to Parliament and to the people. The noble lord has professed—every man in this House has heard him profess—that he will carry the measure of Union only by the free consent of Parliament and of the country; has this refusal of the escheatorship of Munster been a consequence of that profession? Have the instructions given to sheriffs not to call meetings of their counties been in conformity with that profession? Is it to carry the Union by the free consent and unbiassed judgment of the people that all the public prints have been bought up, and either bribed to silence on the subject of Union, or filled with

publications in support of it? Sir, it is very easy for a Minister to clasp his hands and to implore the house to refrain from pledging itself on the measure of a legislative Union until the sense of the country shall be known. It is very easy thus to implore Parliament, and set this entreaty to notes of most pathetical cadence, but acts are the strongest testimonies of intention—the strongest witnesses of motives, and the actions of the noble lord, loudly speaking against his professions, cannot be misunderstood by any man who is not senseless and heartless to the interests of his country, against which the noble lord has arrayed himself in sincere, but I trust futile hostility.

Mr. Mason's motion was carried without a division. Mr. J. C. Beresford then proposed that a pension of 10*l.* a year should be conferred upon Colonel Cole, in order that his seat might be vacated. The Speaker having intimated that such a grant could only be made in a committee of supply, Mr. Beresford moved for such a committee. A second very warm debate was the consequence, in which the weakness of the Government side in debating power was very clearly shown. Mr. McClelland, soon afterwards appointed Solicitor-General, gave a remarkable example of the "*forcible-feeble.*" He commenced with a great affectation of warmth and indignation—

that such a question should be pressed upon the house at a time when a foreign invasion was actually threatened. (Great laughter.) Was the present discussion forced by Government? No! but it originated with the

other side, and at a moment the most dangerous of all others to agitate the public mind; a moment in which no loyal man could listen with patience to any member portraying the Government in such odious terms. He (Mr. McC.) was so angry that he could scarcely speak. Good God! is the spirit of loyalty fled from this house that we hear such language used in it?

Mr. Martin followed, and argued that the Opposition were quite as interested in their opposition to the measure as the friends of Government were in their support of it, "for," said he, "every gentleman of 3,000*l.* a year must suffer by the Union, owing to the loss of patronage and power which they will feel so soon as the Parliament is transferred." Mr. Plunket soon after spoke, but as we have only the newspaper report of what he said, I shall only print one passage of his reply to the two last speakers:—

You, Mr. Speaker, have already, on a former occasion, proved a Union to be inconsistent with the interests of the people of Ireland, and the honourable gentleman who spoke last but two has proved it to be inconsistent with the interests of any member of this house, and of every Irish gentleman of 3,000*l.* a year; and after this I trust there can be but one sentiment in execration of this abominable measure. Another learned gentleman has expressed much indignation at the language used at this side of the house; and when he arose, I was afraid that his indignation would have hurried him beyond the bounds of prudence; but very seasonably he happened to be "so angry that he could scarcely speak," and thus he

found a tolerably good chance of not being able to offend. "I wish, however, that he had bestowed some of his indignation on the conduct which gave rise to the present debate; and if a conduct the most base and flagrant could inspire terms of disapprobation, the honourable and learned member must certainly have recovered the use of his tongue. He would then have had to reprobate the most shameful hypocrisy — the most scandalous effrontery; and the warmth of his eloquence and the freedom of his manner might have been well employed in reprehending the conduct of a Minister who had not only thrown away the substance, but the semblance of virtue.

These were the last words spoken by Plunket against the Ministry that session. He was followed in the debate by Sir Boyle Roche, who concluded, amidst roars of laughter, a very characteristic speech by prophesying, "that it was in the day of judgment and affliction that Ireland would cry out and implore for a Union." Mr. Barrington immediately took advantage of this, and commenced his speech by congratulating the House upon the assurance given by one so much in the confidence of Government as Sir Boyle, that the question of Union should not be again brought forward until the day of judgment.

Castlereagh's was the only good speech of the night on the Government side. The gist of it was a very effective attack upon George Ponsonby, whose whole political career he reviewed, and accused him of giving a steady support to Govern-

ment under the old system until, having quarrelled with them on account of some personal pique, he took up Reform: in fact, charging him with having turned his hand against his former friends in the bitterness of his disappointed ambition.

Political inconsistency was a dangerous ground for a man of Castlereagh's antecedents to venture upon, and he was ably answered by the Right Hon. W. B. Ponsonby (George Ponsonby had already spoken that evening). He concluded his speech with these words :—

When the noble lord talks of disappointed ambition I would have him to know that I have more than once *refused* all the honours that it was in the power of Government to bestow because I would not do the base and dishonourable work conditioned. I scorn a contention of character with the noble lord.

The motion for a committee of supply was lost, and on the 1st of June, the Parliament was suddenly prorogued. In the end of his speech the Lord Lieutenant mentioned that the King had received addresses from both Houses of the British Parliament, favourable to a union upon fair terms, and intimating that his (Lord Cornwallis's) Government would bring on the question again at the earliest opportunity next session.

During the recess his Excellency made a tour throughout the country, in the course of which

no pains were spared to obtain signatures from all classes, even the lowest, to addresses petitioning for the Union. Lord Castlereagh and Mr. Cooke were also busy coming to terms with those whose claims it was thought necessary and possible to satisfy. On the 15th and 16th of January, 1800, occurred the greatest debate that had ever been listened to in the Irish Parliament, and the fate of that assembly was sealed by the division that followed. A desperate resistance was offered to the measure at every subsequent stage, but the struggle was virtually decided that night, and all after efforts were made without hope of ultimate success.

On the 15th of January, 1800, the Parliamentary session was opened in Ireland, with a speech from the throne, in which no mention of the Union appeared; and a copy of the speech having been read in the House of Commons, an address echoing the speech in suitable terms was moved by Viscount Loftus, and seconded by Colonel Crosbie.

Sir Laurence Parsons then rose to move an amendment, to the effect that while England and Ireland were firmly united, and while it was the sincere wish of the Irish people that they should so continue, it was at the same time their interest, and their duty, to maintain the local Parliament

and independent constitution of their country, as established in 1782.

Sir Laurence complained that the Parliament had last year been prevented from formally expressing to the King its opinion of the measure of Union by a sudden prorogation, and the Ministers sought the same object now, by maintaining silence on the subject of Union; though the Government was pledged to bring the measure forward, by the terms used by his Excellency when proroguing the Parliament last summer. He, therefore, suspected that it was the intention of the Minister, by some insidious practice, to take the House at a disadvantage. He then reviewed with much ability and moderation, many of the arguments formerly advanced both by himself and others against the measure, concluding as follows :—

Remove your Parliament and you quit your posts, and abandon your country. You want to preserve the peace of Ireland,—where is the place to do so but in Ireland? You want to preserve the connexion of this country with England—where is the place to do so but in this country? Suppose any man of plain understanding met your Peers and your one hundred members on the road to London and asked them, "What are you going there for?" they answer "To preserve the peace of Ireland!" would he not say, "Good people, go back to your own country; it is there you can best preserve its peace. England does not want you, Ireland does."

Mr. Savage, member for the County Down, for which Lord Castlereagh also sat, challenged the noble lord to deny that the opinion of his constituents was wholly against the Union.

Castlereagh spoke next; he explained that the Union was not mentioned in the speech from the Throne because it was intended to make it the subject of a separate message, and that he meant to move for a call of the House for the next Monday fortnight, to consider the great question. He then contended that it was childish to say that a measure of union could at no time and under no circumstances be beneficial to Ireland. He urged the House not to pledge itself never to entertain a measure which his Majesty had intimated his intention to submit to their consideration. He said there were two sorts of opponents to the measure of a legislative Union. He was very ready to admit that some of them had proved themselves on various occasions to be friends of Ireland and the Constitution, but he could not help thinking that they were indiscreet friends to their country,—they were endeavouring to play too deep a game. They wanted the Constitution of England, but they wanted it without taking the only step which would render the connexion between the two countries solid and permanent. He should

always look to those gentlemen with respect, but he could not consider them as wise friends to their country as long as they connected themselves with persons of a very different description: they certainly could not hope for the confidence of the loyal part of their fellow-subjects. His speech ended thus :—

> This certainly is as awful a crisis as this country has ever seen. Its welfare, its connexion with Great Britain, is at stake, and surely whatever the decision of the Irish Parliament may be upon this subject, it ought to be the result of the most serious and mature deliberation. I will therefore not further trouble the house at present, than to give the amendment my decided negative.

Many able speeches followed before Plunket rose; of these by far the best, perhaps even the best speech of the night, was Bushe's.* But I need only notice one other speech as introductory to that of Mr. Plunket.

Dr. Browne was an American by birth; he obtained a fellowship in the Dublin University, and had represented that constituency for some years. In the preceding session he was a violent Anti-Unionist; but had been converted during the recess. It now became his unpleasant duty to recant all his former opinions

* See Appendix I.

and arguments and to proclaim his new allegiance, The Doctor knew that Mr. Plunket, who had for some time been looking to the university constituency, was lying in wait for him, and he seemed already to wince under the attack, which he sought by anticipation to meet. He declared most solemnly that his change of opinion was the result of sincere conviction; he denied in terms that he had been offered or expected a bribe of any kind, and added,—"I should be more affected by this kind of attack, were it not that it proceeds from a gentleman notoriously a candidate for the College." Mr. Plunket followed:—

Sir, I have no right to sit in judgment on the motives of the honourable member who has just spoken. The secrets of his heart and the springs of his conduct must be left to the great Searcher of hearts; but by his public actions his public character is to be judged, and on those I will beg leave freely to comment. He has stated his reason for refusing to concur in the amendment of the honourable baronet to be, that it would pledge him irretrievably against the measure of a legislative Union: how would that concurrence pledge him more solemnly than the amendment of the last session, proposed by my honourable friend (Mr. G. Ponsonby), in which he then concurred? That was a resolution, that we would support our free constitution as finally established in 1782. This is a resolution declaring that we are in possession of that constitution, and that it is the wish and interest of his Majesty's Irish subjects to remain in possession of that constitution, and in the

state of union and amity with Great Britain which we now enjoy. What has happened to change the sentiments of the honourable gentleman? I have heard that when he was elected to the dignified situation which he now fills, as representative of the University of Dublin, he declared to his constituents that only one possible event could make him harbour the idea of an Union, and that was, to save this country from a separation. [*Cries of "hear, hear," from the Treasury benches.*] I am glad the new friends of the honourable gentleman have found an excuse for him which he did not suggest for himself; if they do not furnish him with an argument, they must relieve him from an anxiety—he was much alarmed, because he knew his opinions would be unpalatable to both sides of the House: but whatever sentiments they may have excited amongst us, they certainly have been received with acclamation by the Minister. The honourable gentleman has told you that he now departs from the pledge which he entered into to his constituents, not because he apprehends any separation between the countries, but because so much corruption has taken place in Parliament, in the course of the last session, and so many bad laws have been passed, that he really feels the constitution not worth preserving. Will the honourable gentleman recollect, that in the last session he not only declared against the measure, but argued with much ability that Parliament was incompetent to adopt it? What has done away their incompetence? Their corruption! He then believed them incapable of sanctioning this measure, and he now rises to pronounce a libel on the Parliament; and on the strength of their iniquities, for which he arraigns them, he declares them armed with authority to dispose of the liberties of Ireland. Not of his country—I rejoice that he has no claim to the name of Irish

man. He has been raised into station by the bounty of the country, and he shows his gratitude by conspiring for the destruction of her liberties. So much for the honourable gentleman—to the comfort of his own reflections, and to the gratitude of his constituents I consign him. But whilst I express an honest indignation against those who have left our cause, and whilst I turn back to shed a tear of regret over the tomb of an honourable and honest man who is now no more (I mean Colonel O'Donnell, the late Member for Donegal), I must congratulate the relations of that gallant man that a phœnix has risen from his ashes—I must congratulate the country on that splendid blaze of eloquence with which his successor has this night delighted and illuminated the house.

Sir, I feel no ordinary sensation on this question being again introduced to the consideration of Parliament. It was ushered into the last Parliament with the same boyish boasting which now accompanies it, and rejected with the same contumely which ultimately awaits it. Without any change in the circumstances of the country, without the production of any new argument, the same men who fled like detected thieves at the close of the last session, and who in the precipitance of their flight stumbled over and overturned all public decency and parliamentary decorum, now exhibit themselves to challenge the national observation, and to brand with the name of faction every man who has honesty and courage to spurn their degrading purposes. What change has taken place? Has the measure changed its nature, or the Minister his objects, or the countries their relations? No, you shall know the changes which have taken place—I will unmask the men who have dared to come into the midst of Parliament and people

to purchase their liberties by sordid bribery and to subdue their spirits by lawless force, and if I cannot awaken the feelings of honour or virtue in their hearts, I will call the blush of shame into their cheeks.

You are told with puny sophistry that you ought at least to discuss the question. What is meant by this? That you should discuss the principle? You have already done so; no principle ever underwent a more ample discussion in Parliament, and after examining it for two entire days in all its relations, and after supposing all the details the most favourable which possibly could be offered to Ireland, the principle was rejected by a majority not only free from any influence, but resisting every influence. If by discussion is meant that we should discuss the details without examining the principle, I utterly refuse to do so. We now stand on the high ground of national independence, secured by solemn compact; and we are called on to declare our readiness to surrender that independence and relinquish that compact for the purpose of treating about we know not what possible advantages, and this is called discussion. In answer to this demand, I say, first, you have not stated any one definite advantage which Ireland can gain, or evil which she can avoid, to induce her to relinquish guaranteed independence. The measure has now been agitated above a year, and we have not to this hour heard stated in definite terms, such as a plain understanding can comprehend, any one specific advantage which we are to gain, or any one evil which we are to escape, by its adoption. We have heard a great deal of lofty language—increased resources and consolidated strength—wealth and morals of England imported—present benefits from England secured—possible evils deprecated—corruption of our own Parliament destroyed—to be

made partakers with the most dignified assembly in the world—danger of separation to be avoided—and political and religious differences closed for ever. This all sounds magnificently; but analyse it, and where a definite meaning can be extracted, no man pretends to say how a Union can forward the thing meant.

Again, I will not admit the principle, because it is a barter of liberty for money, even supposing your advantages as real as they are visionary. The nation which enters into such a traffic is besotted. Freedom is the parent of wealth, and it is an act of parricide to sacrifice the constitution which generates and nourishes your commerce for the supposed improvement of that commerce. This is, indeed, under all its circumstances, the most extravagant demand ever made by one nation from another. Ireland, a happy little island, with a population of between four and five millions of people —hardy, gallant, and enthusiastic—possessed of all the means of civilization—agriculture and commerce well pursued and understood—laws well arranged and administered—a constitution fully recognized and established —her revenues, her trade, her manufactures thriving beyond the hope or example of any other country of her extent, within these few years advancing with a rapidity astonishing even to herself; not complaining of her deficiency in any of these respects, but enjoying and acknowledging her prosperity—is called on to surrender them all, to the control of whom? To a great and powerful continent, to which nature intended her as an appendage? To a mighty people, totally exceeding her in all calculation of territory and population? No, but to another happy little island placed beside her in the bosom of the Atlantic, of little more than double her

territory and population, and possessing resources not nearly so superior to her wants; and this, too, an island which has grown great, and prosperous, and happy by the very same advantages which Ireland enjoys—a free and independent constitution, and the protection of a domestic, superintendent Parliament. The wealth, and power, and dignity of Great Britain (at which no man rejoices more sincerely than I do) are the most irresistible arguments against an Union.

A little clod of earth, by the enjoyment of freedom, has generated strength, and wealth, and majesty. She has reared her head above the waters, and has dictated to the unwieldy, lethargic despotisms, and to the unripened, fertile dependencies of Europe. And does she therefore call upon Ireland to cast from her her constitution, and to resign the same never-failing means to the same ends? No. I must take leave to consider the example of Britain more persuasive and more disinterested than her advice. Further, we are called on by this sister island to connect ourselves in alliance with her; we have already done so in the most indissoluble way; the crown of Ireland necessarily annexed to the Crown of England, and the responsibility of the British Minister as a pledge for their continuation; not like Scotland, where the crowns were accidentally united in the person of the reigning monarch, and where the Parliament had proceeded to sever that solitary bond of connection; not like Scotland, where a Jacobite Parliament had proposed to appoint a king not only different from the King of England, but actually claiming title to the English throne against the lawful monarch; not like Scotland, thus put into a state of war with England, with her shores blockaded and her trade interdicted; but with full and perfect alliance,

founded on unity of executive, unity of interest, and similarity of constitution; and all of them not only uninvaded by, but uniformly strengthened and secured by, the Parliament of Ireland.

Again, sir, I will not admit the principle of Union, because we are not only called on to abandon our tried prosperity and the free constitution which gave birth to it, and without any necessity for so doing, or any specific advantage to be derived; but we are called on to do so on the faith of compact, and by the very persons who, in making the demand, violate the most solemn of all possible compacts, I mean that of 1782. The Minister acts consistently in arraigning that settlement. It is at variance with all his plans, and in contradiction to all his sentiments. That settlement acknowledged the independence of the Irish Parliament on this sound principle, "That the two countries were united by sameness of interest and similarity of constitution; that the strength and security of the one mutually affected the other; that they stand and fall together." You now avow to us that we have no sameness of interest; that we never had and never can have the British constitution; that there are no principles of union in our connexion, that the elements of hostility are essentially intermixed with it; that our weakness is your strength; that our subjugation is your safety; and that you cannot stand unless we fall, and are trampled on. Consistently, therefore, do you arraign that settlement, and candidly do you tell us that it was no compact, but a delusion; that on our part it was an arrogant claim, taking advantage of the weakness and distress of Great Britain, and that on your part it was a political finesse, humouring our childish insolence, yielding to our accidental strength, and that you will

resume in the hour of force what you granted in the hour of feebleness.

Act your part in its full extent—resume it; but do not resort to the mockery of calling on us to relinquish what you tell us we have no right to retain. Do not insult us by offering compacts, when you avow that no compact can bind. Do not hold out to us the taunting pledge of faith and sincerity, when you boast of your total want of faith and sincerity in the compact of 1782. It is not merely by your licensed scribblers that the fraud of 1782 has been fiated. Posterity will scarcely believe the page of history, when they see it recorded by the British Minister. In 1782 you pledged the royal word, you pledged the solemn honour of the Parliaments of both countries. You called on Almighty God to witness the truth and sincerity of that final adjustment; and you now call on us, by the pledge of the same royal faith, by the authority of the same Parliament, and under the same religious sanction, to enter into a new treaty whose basis must be the violation of the former one.

Who is to guarantee it? If by your own authority you claim a right to violate a compact made amongst equals, and you call on us not to contract with, but to surrender to the same persons who have overturned it; if that treaty is not binding on you whilst we are both alive and strong and able to support our mutual pretensions, will this treaty of 1800 be binding when we are extinct by the terms of it, and you survive alone to expound and to enforce it—call down whatever sanction of King or Parliament or God on your new contract, and how will it be treated twenty years hence in an imperial Parliament? If they wish to extinguish your 100 representatives and make you a province in form as well

as substance, may they not then with some colour say, "We told you in 1800 that you had no constitution: your pretended compact you then gave up: we admitted you to our Parliament by courtesy and for a time, and we now at our pleasure dismiss you from it." Would that Act of 1820 be so shameless a violation of the articles of 1800 as these articles of 1800 would be of the compact of 1782?

I say, therefore, I will not quit the vantage ground of freedom and compact to admit the principle of an Union.

But it is said we press the discussion — that no mention of Union has been made in the speech, and that it is unbecoming in us to urge the rejection of a measure which has not been announced. Sir, this is very idle talk. If gentlemen do not feel a due respect for themselves, they should at least have some for the representative of majesty. Is it not more than ludicrous that the Lord Lieutenant should at the close of the last session propose the measure of Union, when Parliament could not answer him, and that he should be utterly silent on it at the commencement of this session, when Parliament is ready to answer him? You well know the reason of this inconsistency. You wait to have your troops recruited. You do something more than conjecture how those members mean to vote whose seats have been vacated since the last session of Parliament. This trick is of a piece with the rest, and the conduct of the measure from first to last is the true expositor of its merits. May I be indulged in taking a very short review of it?

It is admitted by the Minister that the alleged necessity of Union flows merely from the constitution of 1782. From Henry the Second until that time Great

Britain never suggested the idea. It then was suggested not as a measure to be grafted on the constitution of 1782, but as a substitute for it. It was found that no man could be hardy enough to utter the sentiment in this country, and it was abandoned. You thereupon acknowledged our independent constitution, and said that all grounds of constitutional disagreement between the two countries were thereby for ever precluded; and yet you now tell us that thereby, and thereby only, they were created. In 1785 commercial differences arose; there were long negociations between the two countries, yet the name of Union never hinted at. They were broken off; still Union never hinted at. At a later period they were renewed and settled, and still Union never hinted at; in 1789 the question of regency arose, and Union was never hinted at. And it is worthy of remark, that at those latter periods both countries were in profound peace, foreign and domestic, and nothing existed to prevent the fair sense of every man in this kingdom, in or out of Parliament, being had upon the subject. At last, in 1795, we see the measure peeping out of the British Cabinet, and the propriety of its adoption mentioned as the reason for dashing the hope which had been held out to the Catholic. The admission of the Catholic, says Lord Carlisle, would deprive the empire of advantages greater than any which she has derived since the revolution, at least since the Union! And it is to be observed, that the Catholic claim is rejected in order to enable the Minister to effect Union, and not Union adopted for the purpose of rejecting the claim. Still, however, the scheme is not avowed to Parliament or people, we only discover it by the accidental disclosure of a Ministerial correspondence.

During the administration of Lord Camden, of whom

I wish to speak with every degree of personal respect, a system was adopted certainly not calculated to soften religious animosities, or to endear the Parliament to the Irish people. I do not mean to comment on the propriety of those measures, but when I reflect that the British Minister had hatched the plan of Union before they were adopted, and when I see the supposed alienation of people from Parliament in consequence of those measures, and the religious and political animosities excited by them used as the instruments for effecting that plan, I cannot divest my mind of the suspicion that the plan was adopted to effect the purpose. During the administration of that nobleman the most extensive, deep, well-planned, and wicked conspiracy that ever nation escaped from was hatched, matured, and prepared to burst upon the country. It was detected in all its parts, and published in all its details, and the energies of the nation called out to resist it, by the vigilance, information, and resources of a resident, superintending Irish Parliament. If this wicked plot of Union had then been effected, and our Parliament had been at Westminster, every vestige of British connexion would have been swept off the face of the land. Well, sir, this rebellion burst on the public with hideous and unexampled atrocity, and it was substantially put down by the resident, loyal men of Ireland; by native valour and native honour, before any reinforcement had arrived from Great Britain; and it is because the connexion has been preserved by the wisdom of the resident Parliament, and by the valour and loyalty of the resident gentlemen of Ireland, that you now propose to banish both. In the summer of 1798 Lord Cornwallis arrived in this country, a man of high character and great military fame, not for the purpose of repelling

invasion, not for the purpose of subduing rebellion, but to apply all his character and all his powers to the achievement of a political purpose. I will not dwell on the glories of his military campaign; I mean him no personal disrespect; but this I must observe, that whilst the military Lord Lieutenant was in the field, with an army of 60,000 men to support him, history will have it to record that we are indebted to a gallant Irishman (Mr. Vereker), at the head of about 800 native troops, for having withstood the enemy, and prevented the capital of Ireland from being entered in triumph by a body of not one thousand Frenchmen.

I do not wish to inquire too minutely why the embers of an extinguished rebellion have been so long suffered to exist; I do not wish to derogate from the praise to which the noble lord may be entitled for his clemency. Its very excesses, if they do not claim praise, are at least entitled to indulgence; but when I see that all the rays of mercy and forbearance are reserved to gild the brow of the viceroy, and that all the odium of harshness and severity is flung upon the Parliament; when I see the clemency of the chief governor throwing its mantle over the midnight murderer; when I see it holding parley with the armed rebel in the field; and when I see the task of making war against the victim in his grave and the infant in the cradle thrown by the same Government upon the Parliament, I cannot avoid suspecting that there is something more than the mere milk of human kindness in the forbearance on the one part, and something more than mere political caution in the severities of the other. But, sir, this rebellion was subdued by the Parliament and people of Ireland; and before the country had a breathing time, before the loyalist had time to rest from his labours; before the

traitor had received his punishment or his pardon; whilst we were all stunned by the stupendous events which had scarcely passed; whilst something little short of horror for all political projects had seized the mind of every man; whilst the ground was yet smoking with the blood of an O'Neill and of a Mountjoy, the wicked conspiracy was announced which was to rob their country of its liberties and their minor children of their birthright. With a suspended Habeas Corpus Act, with military tribunals in every county, the overwhelming and irretrievable measure of Union was announced for the free, enlightened, and calm discussion of an Irish Parliament, and with all these engines of terror still suspended over their heads it is again submitted to them.

How was it brought forward? A hireling of the Castle employed to traduce Parliament and insult the country; hopes held out to the Catholic that he should be established if he adopted; threats to the Protestant that he should be annihilated if he rejected; the constitution of 1782 openly treated as a system of force on our part and of compulsion on the part of England, and the right to resume it openly asserted. Whilst this impolitic insult was circulated through the country by the authority of Government, the Lord Lieutenant sent to some of the principal gentlemen, merely to request their attention to the subject, but at the same time to assure them that he did not wish it to be carried unless by the uninfluenced opinion of the wealth and sense and loyalty of the country. What was the first parliamentary step? The Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Sergeant turned out of office because they ventured to declare an opinion against it. The measure was brought forward without hinting at the opinion of the people, but, on the contrary,

asserting the full competence of Parliament to decide without them. An insidious speech prepared by the Minister and delivered from the throne, affecting to advise merely general strengthening of the empire, but which the Secretary was compelled to avow meant Union, and Union only. What followed? The measure was justified by the noble Secretary on account of the poverty and wretchedness of Ireland, and the necessity of separation flowing from the constitution of 1782. The principle of influence which had been exerted was justified, and the intention fairly avowed of following it up to the full extent of the prerogative. The question was discussed for two days in all its relations, the principle examined and the details supposed the most favourable which possibly could be granted to Ireland, and after that full discussion, in despite of the calamities and terrors of the times, in despite of the surprise with which it was brought on, in despite of the influence exercised and avowed, the preliminary principle was rejected by a majority not only not acting under any corrupt influence, but against all corrupt influence.

I need not remind you of the transport with which that determination was received in every corner of the kingdom. Whatever might have been the former errors of Parliament, they were lost in the virtue and splendour of that event. What, sir, was the consequence? In opposition to the declared sense of Parliament and known wishes of the people, you were told, by one whom I may, without offence, call, if not a boy, at least a very young man, "that you were all in error; that you should hereafter implore as a blessing what you now deprecate as a curse; and that he would never lose sight of the measure, but would govern you for the purpose." I ask, was such language or conduct ever ventured on by a

defeated Minister; or would this insolence have been dared, if you had been considered as a free Parliament or a free people? What was the conduct of Great Britain? Exactly corresponding in contemptuousness with that of their Minister here. On the very day of the defeat in the Irish Parliament, the Minister of England, confiding in the dark promises of his partisans here, and taking our acquiescence to the surrender of our constitution as a thing of course, announces the measure to the British Parliament, and gains their ready assent—no reluctance on their part, as when the free trade was obtained—no reluctance as on the repeal of 6th of George, or on the renunciation, or on the Commercial Propositions, which we thought so bad that we rejected them, although they acceded to them with regret, as much too good for us. No, sir, knowing that Union would make them masters, their ready acquiescence is procured. Well! by the temerity and boasting of a very young man, the Parliament of one country is committed against the other. What is done by the Minister when the disappointment is announced? Is he overwhelmed with shame? Anxious to extricate himself? No; he proceeds with as much composure as if he had our complete assent; he treats us like silly, passionate children, and goes on to adjust the terms. He makes a lofty, turgid speech, talks in high-sounding general terms of increased resources and consolidated strength; a couple of powdered lacquies of epithets waiting upon every substantive. Whatever we may think of the wisdom or justness of the oration, we cannot but admire its fashion and its pomp; and after all this absurd jargon, which has been so often exposed, he proceeds to inform the British House, that he is satisfied an enlightened majority must proceed to adopt the measure; and after the great

leviathan has concluded his tumblings, a young whale puts up his nostrils, and spurts his blubber on this country, and tells a British senate, that when he came over to Ireland to put down the rebellion, he discovered the true character of the country, and that it is best summed up by Swift's verses on the town of Carlow, "High church and low steeple, poor town and proud people;" and all this to the great admiration of the wisest and most liberal assembly in the world. Give me leave, sir, here to advert to the declaration made in the House of Lords on the same subject by my Lord Auckland, who had been an Irish Secretary in the Administration of Lord Carlisle; he declares, "that he knows enough of the theatre of action, and of the principal actors on that theatre, to do them the justice to believe, that their resistance will give way to the commanding voice of reason and of truth." Whoever remembers the administration of that noble lord in this country, when he was Mr. Eden, would be able to comprehend the full force and delicacy of the strain of irony in which he proves the candour and docility of the Irish Parliament.

On such grounds as these, in defiance of our proceedings the Crown is addressed, and the father of his people is made to say, that he will take the first opportunity of laying before his Irish Parliament the same principle in the detail which they had already rejected in the general.

[Here it was said from the Treasury Bench, that his Majesty's expression was not "the first," but a proper opportunity.]

I thank the noble lord for the correction; we shall see presently in what the propriety of the opportunity consisted. Has the royal word been kept in that respect by the Minister? The resolution passed early in the

session. The Irish Parliament was adjourned at the request of the noble lord, for the express purpose of our being apprised of the result of the English deliberations. And yet, during the whole course of the session, not a word is said upon the subject. The proper opportunity had not arrived; but the noble lord was certainly not remiss in his efforts to create that opportunity. He proceeded to accomplish the predictions of the British Minister and of himself; to endeavour to corrupt and pack the Parliament, so that an enlightened majority should pass the measure, and so to govern the country, that they should implore Union, or anything rather than remain as they were. How effectual the latter part of his plan has been, you perceive from the declaration of the hon. member (Doctor Browne), who declares that he is made a proselyte to the measure by the abominable proceedings of the Minister and the Parliament. The Minister in the meantime proceeded to execute his threats of dismission from office. Every man, whether in a confidential situation or not, who had dared to express his free opinion, was dismissed. When men would not be base enough openly to apostatize, their resignation was purchased; the place bill, which had been enacted to preserve the liberties of the subject, was converted into an instrument to oppress them; and no man suffered to vacate his seat, unless he would stipulate an Unionist for his successor. The same Lord Lieutenant who at first had declared his intention to submit the question to the uninfluenced sense of the country, frankly avowed his determination to abuse the prerogative for this scandalous purpose; and the noble lord who had declared, in full Parliament, that he never would press the measure, even with a majority, against the free sense of Parliament, heard himself publicly

branded with his shameful departure from that promise, in the case of Colonel Cole, without having the hardihood to deny it! The British Minister thought this last act too indecent even for the meridian of Ireland, and the Parliament was the next day prorogued.

The public will not easily forget that memorable day, when the usher of the black rod was stationed within the doors of the commons, to watch the instant at which the house assembled. The public will not easily forget the indecent precipitation with which the message from the throne was delivered, without allowing time even for the ordinary vote of thanks to you, sir, for your conduct in that chair. They will not easily forget, not the absence, but the disgraceful flight of the Minister of the country, to avoid the exposure and the punishment of guilt. When the functions of this House were thus superseded, his Excellency, for the first time, thought proper to inform them of the resolutions of the British Parliament; and he was further pleased to insinuate, that it would be a great satisfaction to him in his old age, if we would be so good as to adopt this measure of an incorporating Union.

I must, for one, beg to be excused from making quite so great a sacrifice, from mere personal civility, to any Lord Lieutenant, however respectable he may be. The independence of a nation, I must own, does not appear to me to be exactly that kind of bagatelle which is to be offered by way of compliment, either to the youth of the noble lord who honours us by his presence in this House; or to the old age of the noble marquis, who occasionally sheds his setting lustre over the other. To the first, I am disposed to say, in the words of Waller—

I pray thee, gentle boy,
Press me no more for that slight toy;

and to the latter I might apply the language of Lady Constance—

> That's a good child—go to its grandam—give grandam kingdom—and its grandam will give it a plum, a cherry, and a fig—there's a good grandam.

I hope, therefore, sir, I shall not be thought impolite if I decline the offer of the constitution of Ireland, either as a garland to adorn the youthful brow of the Secretary, or to be suspended over the pillow of the Viceroy.

Thus ended that never-to-be-forgotten session. What has since been done? During the whole interval between the sessions the same barefaced system of parliamentary corruption has been pursued. Dismissals, promotions, threats, promises. In despite of all this, the Minister feared he could not succeed in Parliament; and he affected to appeal to what he had before despised —the sentiment of the people. When he was confident of a majority, the people were to be heard only through the constitutional medium of their representatives. When he was driven out of Parliament the sense of the people became everything. Bribes were promised to the Catholic clergy—bribes were promised to the Presbyterian clergy —I trust they have been generally spurned with the contempt they merited. The noble lord understands but badly the genius of the religion in which he was educated. You held out hopes to the Catholic body, which were never intended to be gratified; regardless of the disappointment, and indignation, and eventual rebellion, which you might kindle—regardless of everything, provided the present paltry little object were obtained. In the same breath you held out professions to the Protestant equally delusive: and having thus prepared the way, the representative of majesty sets out on his mission to court the sovereign majesty of the people.

It is painful to dwell on that disgraceful expedition —no place too obscure to be visited—no rank too low to be courted—no threat too vile to be employed—the counties not sought to be legally convened by their sheriffs—no attempt to collect the unbiassed suffrage of the intelligent and independent part of the community—public addresses begged for from petty villages —and private signatures smuggled from public counties. And how procured? By the influence of absentee landlords; not over the affections, but over the terrors, of their tenantry. By griping agents and revenue officers. And after all this mummery had been exhausted; after the lustre of royalty had been tarnished by this vulgar intercourse with the lowest of the rabble; after every spot had been selected where a paltry address could be procured, and every place avoided where a manly sentiment could be encountered; after abusing the names of the dead, and forging the signatures of the living; after polling the inhabitants of the gaol, and calling out against the Parliament the suffrages of those who dare not come in to sign them till they had got their protection in their pocket; after employing the revenue officer to threaten the publican, that he should be marked as a victim, and the agent to terrify the shivering tenant with the prospect of his turf-bog being withheld, if he did not sign your addresses; after employing your military commanders, the uncontrolled arbiters of life and death, to hunt the rabble against the constituted authorities; after squeezing the lowest dregs of a population of near five millions—you obtained about five thousand signatures, three-fourths of whom affixed their names in surprise, terror, or total ignorance of the subject: and after all this canvass of the people, and after all this corruption wasted on the Parliament,

and after all your boasting that you must carry the measure by a triumphant majority, you do not dare to announce the subject in the speech from the Throne.

You talk of respect for our gracious sovereign. I ask, what can be a more gross disrespect than this tampering with the royal name—pledged to the English Parliament to bring the measure before us at a proper opportunity—holding it out to us at the close of the last session, and not daring to hint it at the beginning of this. Is it not notorious why you do not bring forward the measure now? Because the fruits of your corruption have not yet ripened; because you did not dare to hazard a debate last Session, in order to fill up the vacancies which the places bestowed by you, avowedly for this question, had occasioned; because you have employed the interval in the same sordid traffic; and because you have a band of disinterested patriots waiting to come in and complete the enlightened majority who are to vote away the liberties of Ireland.

Will you dare to act on a majority so obtained? Fatal will be your councils, and disastrous your fate, if you resolve to do so. You have adopted the extremes of the despot and the revolutionist; you have invoked the loyal people and Parliament of Ireland, who were not calling on you; you have essayed every means to corrupt that Parliament, if you could, to sell their country; you have exhausted the whole patronage of the Crown in execution of that system; and to crown all, you openly avow, and it is notoriously a part of your plan, that the constitution of Ireland is to be purchased for a stipulated sum. I state a fact, for which, if untrue, I deserve serious reprehension; I state it as a fact, which you cannot dare to deny, that 15,000*l.* a piece is to be given to certain individuals, as the price

for their surrendering—what? Their property? No; but the rights of the representation of the people of Ireland; and you will then proceed in this, or in any imperial Parliament, to lay taxes on the wretched natives of this land to pay the purchase of their own slavery. It was in the last stage of vice and decrepitude that the Roman purple was set up for sale, and the sceptre of the world transferred for a stipulated price; but even then the horde of slaves who were to be ruled would not have endured that their country itself should have been enslaved to another nation.

Do not persuade yourselves that a young, gallant, hardy, enthusiastic people like the Irish are to be enslaved by means so vile, or will submit to injuries so palpable and galling. From those acts of despotism you plunge into the frenzy of revolution, at a time when political madness has desolated the face of the world; when all establishment is staggering under the drunkenness of theory; when in this country, which it is said has been peculiarly visited by the pestilence, even the projects, which the noble lord may recollect to have been entertained by the Northern Whig Club, have been necessarily suspended, if not abandoned; when you have found it necessary to enact temporary laws, taking away almost every one of the ordinary privileges of the subject of a free constitution; with the trial by jury superseded, and the whole country subject to martial law—a law, by which the liberty and life of every man rest merely on the security of military discretion; a law which you have not yet ventured to repeal, and the necessity of whose continuance is strangely hinted at in the speech from the Throne; with a bloody rebellion only extinguished, and a formidable invasion only escaped; you call on this distracted

country to unroof itself of its constitution, and having been refuted by the wisdom and virtue of Parliament, you desire the rabble of every description to array themselves against the constituted authorities, and to put down the Parliament, because Parliament would not put down the constitution.

Are the people of Ireland cured of their frenzy? Take off their fetters—restore the Habeas Corpus—give back the trial by jury—repeal the martial law bill—let the ordinary laws resume their course. Are they maniacs, and are they manacled?—do not erect them into law-givers and judges. Do not insult them by a mock appeal—do not at the same time trample on them as slaves and worship them as masters. These, sir, are not the times for theory—let us cling to experience; it tells us we can exist with a common King and separate Parliaments, because we have done so for ages; and therefore, when I see a modern Solon taking to pieces the different parts of our constitution, like those of a watch, and asking, "If you have a common King, would it not be better, *a priori*, to have a common Parliament?" I laugh at his visions. Will he answer to me, that if the people are called on to pull down the parliamentary part of their constitution, they will stop precisely there?

I ask him further, what is there in his theory of equal value to the proof from experience, that a common King and separate Parliaments produce a good practical system of liberty and connexion. The two Parliaments may clash! So in Great Britain may King and Parliament; but we see they never do so injuriously. There are principles of repulsion! Yes; but there are principles of attraction, and from these the enlightened statesman extracts the principle by which the countries are to be harmoniously

governed. As soon would I listen to the shallow observer of nature, who should say there is a centrifugal force impressed on our globe, and, therefore, lest we should be hurried into the void of space, we ought to rush into the centre to be consumed there. No; I say to this rash arraigner of the dispensations of the Almighty, there are impulses from whose wholesome opposition eternal wisdom has declared the law by which we revolve in our proper sphere, and at our proper distance. So I say to the political visionary, from the opposite forces which you object to, I see the wholesome law of imperial connexion derived—I see the two countries preserving their due distance from each other, generating and imparting heat, and light, and life, and health, and vigour, and I will abide by the wisdom and experience of the ages which are past, in preference to the speculations of any modern philosopher.

Sir, I warn the Ministers of this country against persevering in their present system. Let them not proceed to offer violence to the settled principles or to shake the settled loyalty of the country. Let them not persist in the wicked and desperate doctrine which places British connexion in contradiction to Irish freedom. I revere them both—it has been the habit of my life to do so. For the present constitution I am ready to make any sacrifice. I have proved it. For British connexion I am ready to lay down my life. My actions have proved it. Why have I done so? Because I consider that connexion essential to the freedom of Ireland. Do not, therefore, tear asunder to oppose to each other these principles which are identified in the minds of loyal Irishmen. For me, I do not hesitate to declare, that if the madness of the revolutionist should tell me you must sacrifice British connexion, I would adhere to that connexion in

preference to the independence of my country. But I have as little hesitation in saying, that if the wanton ambition of a Minister should assault the freedom of Ireland and compel me to the alternative, I would fling the connexion to the winds, and I would clasp the independence of my country to my heart. I trust the virtue and wisdom of the Irish Parliament and people will prevent that dreadful alternative from arising. If it should come, be the guilt of it on the heads of those who make it necessary.

Mr. St. George Daly replied to both Plunket and Bushe with a great deal of asperity, and some effect. The following amusing account of this attack is given by Sir Jonah Barrington from his recollection of the scene :—

Mr. Daly's attack on Mr. Bushe was of a clever description, and had Mr. Bushe had one vulnerable point, his assailant might have prevailed. He next attacked Mr. Plunket, who sat immediately before him ; but the materials of his vocabulary had been nearly exhausted. However, he was making some progress, when the keen visage of Mr. Plunket was seen to assume a curled sneer, which, like a legion offensive and defensive, was prepared for any enemy. No speech could equal that glance of contempt and ridicule. Mr. Daly received it like an arrow—it pierced him—he faltered like a wounded man, his vocal infirmity became more manifest, and after an embarrassed pause he yielded, changed his ground, and attacked by wholesale every member of his own profession who had opposed an Union, and termed them a disaffected and dangerous faction.

When Mr. Daly finished his speech the morning was far advanced. Soon afterwards occurred a scene that seemed the climax of this exciting debate. Just when Mr. Egan had risen to speak, the doors of the House of Commons were thrown open, and Henry Grattan, who had been returned for Wicklow the night before, entered the House.* His form was emaciated by sickness, and his face was worn with anxiety; his limbs tottered; he was obliged to lean upon his friends Arthur Moore and George Ponsonby; he advanced slowly to the table. Acting on the impulse of his really noble nature, Castlereagh rose at the head of the Treasury Bench, and remained standing and uncovered while the venerable patriot took the oaths. Grattan then moved slowly to his seat, selecting a place beside Mr. Plunket, and having obtained permission to speak sitting, he addressed the House for nearly two hours, in a speech of great power. Corry was put up by Castlereagh to reply to him, which he did with a good deal of effect. The House then divided at ten o'clock in the morning, and Ministers had a majority of 42, the numbers being 138 to 96.

* The reporters who have transmitted to us the account of the debates of the day state,—"Never was beheld a scene more solemn; an indescribable emotion seized the House and gallery, and every heart heaved in tributary pulsation to the name, the virtues, and the return to Parliament of the founder of the constitution of 1782, the existence of which was then the subject of debate."

This division virtually decided the fate of the measure. Night after night the Opposition took every opportunity of harassing the Ministry and throwing obstacles in their way, nursing a desperate hope that something might yet occur to prevent its enactment. In these efforts none were more resolute and bitter than Plunket; for instance, on the 10th of March George Ponsonby asked Lord Castlereagh whether it was true that a million and a half was to be provided by the Treasury for the purpose of compensating those gentlemen who might lose parliamentary patronage by the effect of the Union. Castlereagh calmly replied that such was the case, and that he only waited until the measure had passed both in the English and the Irish House, in order to settle the exact *quantum* and mode of compensation. This was Plunket's caustic retort :—

> Gentlemen on one side, it appears, are to have compensation for past services, and gentlemen borough-proprietors on the other side are promised compensation in hope of future services. But neither are to have compensation unless the Union is carried.
>
> Here then is a poor country that has travelled, according to the noble lord's account, so rapidly in the career of bankruptcy, that her finances are unequal to her war establishment, or her civil establishment—a nation almost engulphed in the jaws of beggary and ruin—yet this poor country is now told by the Minister, it must find a million and a half of money, to be raffled

for by the members of this House ; but that every man who takes the dice-box in his hand, to throw for his share of the plunder, must first pledge himself to vote for the Union.

What will the people of Ireland say to so base and flagitious a piece of plunder as this juggling from them, by taxes on their wants and miseries, the enormous sum of a million and a half, to reward the betrayers of their rights and liberties ?

Again, on the second reading of the Bill for settling the commercial relations of the two countries under the new system, Mr. Plunket replied to a Mr. May, who had said that he considered it an excellent argument for the Union, that the Irish House might by admixture reform the English Parliament. I must add that one of the articles of Union provided that not more than twenty members of the class to which Mr. May belonged should sit in the United Parliament. Mr. Plunket said :—

This argument, so ingenious, I will not attempt to refute ; nor do I wish to deprive a British Parliament of any advantage they may derive from the infusion of such virtue and independence as that of the honourable gentleman ; but I cannot help calling the attention of the House and of the country to the opinion expressed by the British Minister himself of that class of men who are now to decide on the fate of Ireland. Into a British Parliament twenty men only will be admitted of that description which now constitutes the Minister's majority.

Let no more than twenty placemen vote on the present question, and I would freely and cheerfully submit the fate of the country to their decision. Let the Minister even retain all his placemen, and let him put the question on the constitution of Ireland to a ballot, and I will abide the issue. Let the gentlemen who hold places vote uninfluenced by the fear of losing their situations, and even they will act like Irishmen. Who, then, are this body of men to whose opinion we are asked to look up with so much reverence? They are men whom a British Minister has declared too foul to pollute the walls of a British senate. Those men who are too base to enter the door of one Parliament are to vote the extinction of another, and decide for ever upon the liberties of this country! I again repeat it emphatically, you are incompetent to pass this measure against the sense of the nation. Such an act in such circumstances must want the binding obligation of a law. If any petulant and ignorant should accuse me of treason for this sentiment, I answer him but by scorn. My habits, my known principles, and the whole tenor of my life, give the lie to the imputation.

The last words uttered against the Union in the Irish House were spoken by Plunket. The following extract is from the report of the 10th of June on the motion for a third reading of the Articles of Union Bill.

Mr. Plunket rose and began to arraign the means by which the Union had been carried; and having charged the Minister with having employed bribery,

The Hon. Mr. Butler called him to order. He said

that he represented one of the most respectable counties in the kingdom, and no man could or should dare to say that the influence of bribery could reach him.

Mr. Plunket again rose, and a cry of "order!" "chair!" resounded from both sides of the House, until at length the gallery was cleared, and strangers were not admitted until the House adjourned. While the House was in discussion, a great many of the anti-Union members seceded, and the Union bill passed, and was ordered to the Lords for their concurrence.

CHAPTER V.

GRATTAN—RESULTS OF THE ACT OF UNION—ROBERT EMMETT—TRIAL OF THE CONSPIRATORS—PLUNKET'S ADDRESS—LETTER TO DR. MAGEE—PLUNKET APPOINTED SOLICITOR-GENERAL—LETTER TO MR. WICKHAM—LETTER FROM LORD REDESDALE—JOINS LORD GRENVILLE'S PARTY.

THE Act of Union had been desperately resisted at every step of its progress; but once accomplished it was in its nature irrevocable, and men speedily adapted their habits of thought and ways of living to the new state of things. In Dublin the changes thus wrought throughout the various classes of society were at once manifest. That city, lately the centre of so much political excitement, wore an aspect of melancholy calm. The Houses of Parliament in College Green were closed. The Lords and Commons, who had kept up fashionable town houses, and whose carriages had lately thronged the streets, sold off their mansions and broke up their establishments. Of these, the few who could afford to do so migrated to London, but the greater number retired to their country seats, and a deep despondency settled

down upon all whose circumstances compelled them to remain behind, for it was felt that Dublin had fallen from being the capital of Ireland to the position of a provincial town of the British Empire.

It may easily be imagined how unhappy were the circumstances in which the remnant of the old patriotic party then found themselves placed. They had been turned out of their Parliament "with safe consciences," as Grattan said, "but with breaking hearts." In the new state of affairs they seemed to lose their individualities: when for the last time the doors of the Irish House of Commons closed upon them, they believed that they were shut out for ever from any public career of usefulness or honour, from every chance of serving their country in high places, or of winning renown and fortune for themselves. They saw those who had assisted the Government to carry the measure of Union daily receiving their promised payment in offices, pensions, and peerages, while they themselves were left to obscurity and grief, and rage. On Grattan the blow fell most heavily. He had seen the work of his lifetime undone in a day, his hopes had been disappointed, his prophecies belied, and his policy discredited. He had once believed that by his exertions principally the Irish Parliament had been raised to

honour and to independence, and that he would always be remembered by his fellow-countrymen as the restorer of their liberties and their good name. But he had lived to see that Parliament sink from depth to depth of degradation and contempt, till its career was ended by the treachery of its own members, and with scarcely a regret on the part of the Irish people. Grattan retired wholly from public life. He had a beautiful country place, Tinnehinch, situated on the borders of the counties of Dublin and Wicklow, just where the Dargle river comes rushing down from the Powerscourt Waterfall. There he lived with the members of his own family, declining all political correspondence, and only seeing a few of those who had stood by him in the last bitter struggle. Plunket was at that time one of his most frequent visitors, for already had been begun an intimacy, which ever grew with the growth of their mutual respect, until twenty years later Plunket received from the dying hands of his great patron that magnificent bequest, the conduct of the Catholic cause.

Curran and the others, who had won their great fame in the Irish Parliament, and had grown old in its services, felt that for them the sun of political ambition had set for ever. It is true that Curran afterwards became Master of the

Rolls for Ireland; and on more than one occasion his splendid genius blazed forth with all its former brilliancy, but the energy and the hope that had supported him through so many troubles and struggles were gone. Bushe and Burrowes, and Goold, and the other younger men, settled down to the humdrum labours of their professions "with what appetite they might," to make large fortunes, —to gain great reputations as learned lawyers, or matchless advocates, but never again to cherish the glorious ambition, or hope for the great opportunities of a parliamentary career.

Throughout the country, with the people at large, the varied results that for good or evil were afterwards brought about by the Act of Union did not at first show themselves. The lowest orders in Ireland were at that day sunk in abysses of ignorance and poverty, to a depth that rendered them totally indifferent to political changes that took place so high above their heads. The middle and respectable classes, too, were wearied of the endless struggles and terrors, and disappointments to which they had been for ten years exposed. They had grown so distrustful of their old Parliament, so hopeless of any improvement in that quarter, that they felt only a sentimental sorrow at its destruction. Besides, they had been promised many material advantages from the great

measure of centralization, which was to make them flesh of the flesh and bone of the bone of a mighty empire. They were just in the mood to accept with gratitude the material improvements of their condition that soon flowed from the Union, while it was some time before they regained sufficient heart and spirit to feel and resent the various losses and indignities that must attend the absorption of an independent nationality.

Judging from the peculiar circumstances of Mr. Plunket's position at the Bar and before the public, it is not difficult to imagine with what gloomy despair he must have seen the accomplishment of the Act of Union. It was for the time a total eclipse of his political ambition. Indeed his first instinct was to renew a canvass of the electors of Dublin University, which he had commenced while the Irish Parliament was still in existence, with the avowed object of seeking for an immediate repeal of the measure. In a few weeks, however, he abandoned the idea, unable to resist the logic of accomplished facts. Of all the men who had honestly and sincerely opposed the carrying of the Union, so long as opposition was of any avail, none had been more bitter and uncompromising than he; but that measure once passed he, along with the others, was compelled to

admit that, unless by open rebellion, it was not then, at least, to be repealed. Mr. Plunket was in the prime of life, he had already won a great character as an advocate and a lawyer, a large family was growing up around him, it was necessary that he should apply himself vigorously to his profession; and at it he was certain to succeed; business had already begun to pour in upon him, and he therefore turned his back resolutely upon the brilliant scenes in which he had lately taken a part, and applied himself intensely to the details of a lawyer's life.

The first event of public importance that occurred in Ireland after the Union was the abortive rebellion, planned and attempted by the ill-fated Robert Emmett, in the year 1803. For the part taken by him in Emmett's trial, Mr. Plunket has been visited with the severest censures; all the circumstances have been distorted to suit the purposes alternately of party, malice, and romance. I certainly have no wish to cast a stone at unfortunate Emmett's grave, but it is my duty as Mr. Plunket's biographer to place fairly before the public the circumstances of a transaction which have been much misrepresented. It has been said that Mr. Plunket, in order to ingratiate himself with the Government, insisted, as counsel for the Crown, upon making a malignant and unnecessary

speech against a prisoner whose personal friend he is represented to have been, and from whose father it is asserted he received much kindness. These charges, which have been often repeated, are false in every particular. With Thomas Addis, Robert Emmett's brother, Plunket had at one time been very intimate; but their friendship had long been broken off, and for nearly ten years they had not spoken to one another. But the prisoner at the bar, Mr. Plunket had never even seen; nor had he ever received a kindness at the hands of his father, except when on one occasion he had dined in his house, at the invitation of his son, Thomas Addis; but this circumstance had not led even to a bowing acquaintance between them. In order to understand the spirit in which Mr. Plunket acted in this business, it is necessary to recall briefly the circumstances of Emmett's revolt and of his trial.

The true character of this outbreak came out clearly on the trials of Robert Emmett and his associates. Of these, very full reports may be perused in the volume of *Howell's State Trials* for the year 1803. It is enough for my purpose to say that there were then still to be found amongst the lower orders of the people traces of the passions so violently roused in 1798, and that the chances of a renewal of that struggle were still discussed

by the idle and discontented, whose hopes were sometimes raised by promises on the part of the French Government that they would give assistance against the English. There was, however, no unanimity amongst the disaffected, and the mass of the people were apathetic. How different this outbreak was from the great rebellion of five years before, both in the character and numbers of its supporters, appears from the ease with which it was put down, and from the fact that, with the unfortunate exception of Mr. Emmett himself, no name of respectability is to be found amongst its promoters. The organization that had spread through every portion of the island in the years that had immediately preceded the rebellion, had vanished from amongst the people; but the horrors that attended that event, and the punishment that fell upon them in consequence of it, were still fresh in their recollection. The milder system adopted by the Government, since the Union was already producing its effects, and material prosperity so long banished from the country by the violence of party passion began to return. Looking back over half a century, three years seem but a speck upon history, but in the lives of men the lapse of three years affords time for great changes of opinion and the modification of prejudices. In fact, never did a moment occur

less propitious for an attempt to sever the connexion between England and Ireland. Such an attempt, however, was made by Robert Emmett.

Robert, born in 1780, was the younger brother, by sixteen years, of Thomas Addis Emmett. He shared to the full his enthusiasm and romance, and amiability, and was possessed of even a larger share of learning and talents; his private character was blameless, and he had already given promise of an extraordinary eloquence. He had been educated in Dublin University with Thomas Moore, who has left a most affectionate record of their friendship. When he had finished his college career he went to reside with his brother Thomas Addis, then an exile in Paris. He returned from thence full of opinions upon questions of Irish policy held by men who had not visited this country since 1798, and who knew nothing of the changes that had in the meantime taken place. On arriving in Ireland, in 1802, he at once set himself the task of organizing an independent Irish Republic. He met no sympathy at all amongst the better classes, and was therefore obliged to choose his associates from amongst those persons who, having nothing to lose, and everything to gain by a revolution, could be depended upon as steady sympathisers in his views. Even of such followers he had few,

but his plans were made on the grandest scale. It is not easy now to judge how far they were suited to the occasion, as his arrangements were thrown into confusion by an accidental explosion of gunpowder in a house in Dublin, where the conspirators had their depôt of arms. Suspicions were aroused and inquiries made which compelled Emmett to precipitate the outbreak; it began prematurely on the evening of the 23rd of July, 1803, and was at an end within an hour from the time it broke out, not however before the Chief Justice of the King's Bench, and several others, who happened to be passing through the streets where the rebels were assembled, had been murdered. Lord Kilwarden* was one of the most humane and upright judges that have adorned the Irish Bench, and his murder, with circumstances of great brutality, aroused a strong feeling amongst all classes against the assassins. It is but fair to state that Emmett was not present at this occurrence, which he would otherwise, no doubt, have exerted himself to prevent. Grattan, writing a few days afterwards to a friend, thus describes the affair:—

* Lord Kilwarden (Arthur Wolfe), born 1739; Solicitor-General for Ireland, 1787; Attorney-General, 1789; Chief Justice of the King's Bench, 1798. The ability and humanity with which he conducted himself in these offices secured him a well-merited and honourable popularity. His dying words were,—"Murder must be punished; but let no man suffer for my death, but on a fair trial, and by the laws of his country."

A shocking business! Sunday night a party of (I know not what name to give their stupidity or barbarity) rose up in two of the streets of Dublin, murdered a Judge, killed his nephew in the presence of his daughter, shot a colonel, and wounded a passenger, fled, or were taken. This is getting up merely to be cut down; their hanging is of little moment, but they ruin the country. I have not heard anything further, nor can I find out what instigators these wretches can have had.*

This was in fact as much as was publicly known of the business, when the Commission began to sit to try the conspirators; the less important prisoners were put upon their trial, from the 31st of August to the 19th September. On these occasions the leading counsel for the Crown were the Attorney-General (O'Grady), the Solicitor-General (McClelland), and Mr. Plunket. In all the cases the Attorney-General stated the case for the Crown, and in those in which a reply was thought advisable, it had been entrusted to the Solicitor-General. As the trials went on it became more evident that Robert Emmett had not only been the most considerable person connected with the insurrection, but was in fact the heart of it; and in his case, as it was thought very important that the attempted rebellion should appear in its true character, and since much was not to be

* Letter from H. Grattan to Rev. Mr. Berwick, July 25, 1803. *Life and Times of Henry Grattan*, by his son, vol. v. p. 223.

expected in the way of a speech from McClelland, and a great deal from the prisoner, Mr. Plunket was asked to undertake the business; and this task he accepted, being, to use his own words, "of opinion that it would be of some service to the public, that he should avail himself of the public opportunity of speaking to the evidence at the trial, by pointing out the folly and wildness, as well as the wickedness of the conspiracy that at the time existed."

At the trial Emmett adopted the course of not calling witnesses on his side, and allowed only such questions to be put in cross-examination of the Crown witnesses, as, while amounting to a confession of treason, went to make that treason look as attractive as possible; neither did he suffer his counsel to address the jury in his behalf, no doubt intending to be his own advocate, when called upon to say "wherefore sentence of death should not be passed upon him." When Mr. Plunket rose to address the jury, it was objected by Mr. MacNally, one of the prisoner's counsel, that he could not do so, as there was no body of hostile evidence to which he could reply. The Attorney-General (O'Grady) insisted upon the Crown's right in this respect, and added,—"It is at my particular request that Mr. Plunket rises to address the court and jury upon this occasion." Howell's

report of this speech, though probably correct in substance, is manifestly most inaccurate in the language. I shall quote but a few sentences of it. Having commented upon the evidence in the case in such a manner as to show strongly that this insurrection had no roots amongst the people at large, and that, with the exception of Emmett, no person of respectability was connected with it; and having pointed out the hopelessness of such an attempt made against a power so great as that of England, Mr. Plunket is reported to have said:—

Gentlemen, so far I have taken up your time with observing upon the nature and extent of the conspiracy, its objects and the means by which they proposed to effectuate them. Let me now call your attention to the pretexts by which they seek to support them. They have not stated what particular grievance or oppression is complained of, but they have travelled back into the history of six centuries—they have raked up the ashes of former cruelties and rebellions, and upon the memory of them, they call upon the good people of this country to embark into similar troubles; but they forget to tell the people, that until the infection of new-fangled French principles was introduced, this country was for a hundred years free from the slightest symptom of rebellion, advancing in improvement of every kind beyond any example, while the former animosities of the country were melting down into a general system of philanthropy and cordial attachment to each other. They forget to tell the people whom they address that they have been

enjoying the benefit of equal laws, by which the property, the person, and constitutional rights and privileges of every man are abundantly protected. They have not pointed out a single instance of oppression. Give me leave to ask any man who may have suffered himself to be deluded by these enemies of the law, what is there to prevent the exercise of honest industry and enjoying the produce of it? Does any man presume to invade him in the enjoyment of his property? If he does, is not the punishment of the law brought down upon him? What does he want? What is it that any rational friend to freedom could expect, that the people of this country are not fully and amply in the possession of? And therefore when those idle stories are told of six hundred years' oppression and of rebellions prevailing when this country was in a state of ignorance and barbarism, and which have long since passed away, they are utterly destitute of a fact to rest upon; they are a fraud upon feeling, and are the pretext of the factious and ambitious, working upon credulity and ignorance.

Let me allude to another topic: they call for revenge on account of the removal of the Parliament. Those men who, in 1798, endeavoured to destroy the Parliament, now call upon the loyal men, who opposed its transfer, to join them in rebellion; an appeal vain and fruitless. Look around and see with what zeal and loyalty they rallied round the throne and constitution of the country. Whatever might have been the difference of opinion heretofore among Irishmen upon some points, when armed rebels appeared against the laws and public peace, every minor difference was annihilated in the paramount claim of duty to our king and country.

. . . . . .

Gentlemen, why do I state these facts? Is it to show

that the Government need not be vigilant, or that our gallant countrymen should relax in their exertions? By no means; but to induce the miserable victims who have been misled by those phantoms of revolutionary delusion, to show them, that they ought to lose no time in abandoning a cause which cannot protect itself, and exposes them to destruction, and to adhere to the peaceful and secure habits of honest industry. If they knew it, they have no reason to repine at their lot. Providence is not so unkind to them in casting them in that humble walk in which they are placed. Let them obey the law and cultivate religion, and worship their God in their own way. They may prosecute their labour in peace and tranquillity; they need not envy the higher ranks of life, but may look with pity upon that vicious despot who watches with the sleepless eye of disquieting ambition and sits a wretched usurper trembling upon the throne of the Bourbons. But I do not wish to awake any remorse, except such as may be salutary to himself and the country, in the mind of the prisoner. But when he reflects, that he has stooped from the honourable situation in which his birth, talents, and his education placed him, to debauch the minds of the lower orders of ignorant men with the phantoms of liberty and equality, he must feel that it was an unworthy use of his talents; he should feel remorse for the consequences which ensued, grievous to humanity and virtue, and should endeavour to make all the atonement he can, by employing the little time which remains for him in endeavouring to undeceive them.

Liberty and equality are dangerous names to make use of; if properly understood, they mean enjoyment of personal freedom under the equal protection of the laws; and a genuine love of liberty inculcates a friendship for

our friends, our king, and country—a reverence for their lives, an anxiety for their safety; a feeling which advances from private to public life, until it expands and swells into the more dignified name of philanthropy and philosophy.

When Mr. Plunket concluded his address, Lord Norbury charged the jury, minutely recapitulating the evidence and impartially explaining the law. The jury, without leaving their box, pronounced the prisoner guilty. Mr. Emmett was then called upon to say "wherefore sentence of death should not be passed." With extraordinary courage and glorious eloquence he defended his personal motives; but when he proceeded to attack the Government, he was interrupted by the judge, and his doom was pronounced.*

* This splendid fragment of eloquence is one of the most extraordinary efforts that enthusiasm has ever produced. Indeed, Emmett seems to have been destitute of the instinct of fear. From the moment of his condemnation to that of his execution his courage never failed him. His indifference to a humiliating and miserable punishment seemed almost a courting of death, as if he thought life not to be endured when the light of his political ambition had been extinguished. Another circumstance has helped to draw interest and pity more closely around his fate. Soon after his death it became publicly known that he was the lover of John Philpot Curran's daughter, and that it was to secure an interview with her that he risked his last chance of escape. After his rebellion had failed, he saw her at her father's house, and obtained, it would seem for the first time, an admission that his passion was returned; but disappointment and failure dogged him at every step—he was arrested a few hours after he had left Mr. Curran's house. It is this love-story that Moore has immortalized in one of his most exquisite songs, "She is far from the land where her young hero sleeps." "Oh breathe not his name" has also reference to Robert Emmett.

When all the circumstances of Emmett's trial have been thus recalled to the reader's recollection he will no doubt admit that Mr. Plunket did no more than his duty. It was desirable that this foolish and disastrous attempt at rebellion should be denounced, so as to make it appear at once wicked and contemptible; and by no other man could this have been done with so much weight and authority as by Mr. Plunket. He had resisted the Act of Union to the last, and had carried his hostility to the limits of constitutional opposition; but at the moment of hottest debate he had carefully guarded himself from the suspicion of disaffection. The integrity of his patriotism and of his loyalty remained equally unimpeached. When the measure of the Union had been carried, in spite of all his efforts, he had seen it accepted by the respectable classes of his fellow-countrymen. Prosperity had returned to the country, with a returning sense of security. In a wise and manly spirit he had resolved to adopt the new system, and to make the best of the change which could not be undone. Then broke out Emmett's Rebellion, aimed, not at a repeal of the Union, but at a severance of the connexion. Weak and contemptible for the purposes it proposed to accomplish, it was just strong enough to produce much individual misery, and to give the national progress

a severe check. Mr. Plunket's whole life had been a protest against revolutions, coming from whatever quarter, and he gladly seized this opportunity of exposing the folly and wickedness of this last revolt, and of identifying himself more closely with the party of order. As to Mr. Emmett himself, Mr. Plunket spoke of his conduct sternly, but not, I think, unfairly; for had he invested it with the attributes of poetry or romance he would have defeated the very object for which his speech was made.

When Mr. Plunket accepted the office of Solicitor-General, a few months after Emmett's trial, the opportunity was too good a one to be missed by his public and private enemies. The extreme Radicals both in England and in Ireland denounced him as a renegade from their party—though he had never belonged to it; and Cobbett, as their champion, published next year in England an account of this transaction, which has been made the basis of all the subsequent false or uncandid representations of his conduct.

Mr. Plunket immediately sued him in an action for libel, and obtained a verdict for 500*l.* damages. But though Mr. Plunket incurred the abuse of angry demagogues and disappointed revolutionists, he lost the respect of none whose good opinion he cared to have. The reader of this book may judge from the correspondence it contains how

little was thought of these false charges by any of the illustrious and high-minded public men with whom he soon formed political connexion; nor did he suffer, so far as I know, the loss of a single private friend. Peter Burrowes, whose tenderness of heart was only surpassed by his honesty, was the intimate of Robert Emmett, and his counsel on his trial, but all through his life he indignantly refuted the calumnies to which I have referred.

I extract some passages from a letter (of a very private nature) written by Mr. Plunket only a month after Emmett's execution, to his old friend Magee, who had already risen into considerable notice as a preacher and theological writer.

Letter from Mr. Plunket to Dr. Magee.

Hodlyhead, October 6, 1803.

MY DEAR MAGEE,

I received your letter at Bangor on Sunday last, where Mrs. Plunket and I had gone from an odd whim of wishing to see the boys. We returned on Tuesday after a pleasant excursion to Carnarvon and Beaumaris. On this side of the water I have been since the 21st of last month. I looked on everything as quiet after Emmett's execution, and I stood in need of some relaxation. I am sorry to hear your accounts of the part of England in which you are, and I do believe that the invasion will be attempted; however, I entertain no serious apprehension as to the final issue of it. I cannot exactly agree with you in thinking that "if Ireland is certainly the exclusive object of it, all will be well." They have not sent us

troops or generals. The Commander-in-Chief has not yet arrived, nor any appearance of his preparing to do so. If 10,000 Frenchmen land in Ireland, in its present state of preparation, the consequences may be very deplorable. As to the rebellion it has been in my opinion very contemptible, and very little either of talents or property engaged in it: a few middling shopkeepers, most (if not all) of them the *debris* of the rebellion of 1798, formed the head of it, and the lowest rabble the tail, body it had none.

The Catholics certainly have not been generally involved in it. With all this I fear very much that a French invasion sufficiently strong to establish itself in the country for a fortnight would let loose a very formidable body indeed of discontent.

. . . . . .

A letter from the lady* you mention was found in Emmett's pocket when he was taken: it was partly love and partly politics, enough of the latter to show that she was well acquainted with his schemes. There was nothing however to create the slightest suspicion of any of her connexions; and the letter, though produced on the trial, was not used in such a way as to make known her name, or even to appear as if from a lady. She was not kept in confinement, and the father expresses, and I believe feels, great gratitude to Government for the delicacy observed to him and to her. He is an unfortunate man in almost every circumstance of his life.

. . . . . .

I was sorry to see P., the scholar, sitting close to the clock during Emmett's trial and assisting his attorney in challenging the jurors. He and another member of the college corps, whose name I forget, appeared particularly

* Miss Curran.

active. Whitley Stokes has subscribed to the anti-rebel fund: this will, I hope, purge all his contempts. Are you prophesying* at present? I wish you would publish. In the meantime I prophesy, that you will be a great man, not from anything you have said or written, or may say and write, but because you have travelled through these countries on a jaunting-car, in the same manner as the Bishop of Killala,† who is not only a piece of a prophet, but a bishop, which is much better. Give the love of all here to Mrs. Magee, and our best regards to the Miss Moulsons, if they are with you.

Yours ever truly,

W. C. P.

In the end of 1803 Mr. Plunket was appointed Solicitor-General for Ireland. Since the meeting of the 9th of December, 1798, at which 100 members of the Bar had pledged themselves to oppose the Union, and only thirty-two had voted in favour of it, every individual of that minority, except five, had obtained their reward; five had been promoted to the bench in the superior courts, ten to be assistant barristers, and the others were satisfied with such places as their various capacities gave a shadow of excuse for conferring upon them.

* In allusion to Magee's theological writings.

† W. Stock, Bishop of Killala, an able and worthy divine, was taken prisoner by the French when they landed at Killala Bay. He wrote a pamphlet, giving a very interesting account of the attempted invasion, and expressing his gratitude for the protection and courtesy which he received at the hands of the French. This production entirely discredited him with the war party.

The Government was therefore at liberty to dispose of their legal patronage upon the principle of recognizing professional ability and standing. It was determined to appoint Mr. Plunket Solicitor-General simply as a recognition of his professional leadership, and as being the man who was at the time best able to conduct the law business of the Crown. This office he accepted. In 1805 he was advanced to the position of Attorney-General under Mr. Pitt's administration, and retained that place under the Ministry of "all the talents," his friend Bushe being Solictor-General.

His conduct in holding office under these successive Ministries, representing wholly different political opinions, will be best explained by the following correspondence, from which it will appear that, under the Ministry of Mr. Addington and Mr. Pitt, Mr. Plunket enjoyed those appointments simply as the professional servant of the Crown; and that, when under the Administration of Lords Grenville and Howick, the Attorney-Generalship had assumed a parliamentary and party character, he did not hesitate to resign it, and followed his leader into a fifteen years' exile from power.

This letter was written to Mr. Wickham, who had been instructed by Lord Grenville to induce

Mr. Plunket to enter Parliament. It is written from the County Mayo, where the special commission employed to try the Threshers was sitting.

Letter from Mr. Plunket to Mr. Wickham.

Castlebar,

MY DEAR SIR, *December* 13, 1806.

. . . . . .

It is really with extreme regret that I receive from you the intimation of Lord Grenville's very particular desire that I should attend in Parliament for this session.

I cannot but be sensible of the honour done me by his lordship in supposing that my services are worthy of being pressed for, and it is painful to me to show anything like reluctance in complying with a wish conveying so favourable an opinion. When the subject was first communicated to me some time since by Mr. Elliot, I mentioned fully the private and personal motives which induced me to decline the situation; I will not trouble you with a repetition of them, but I will beg leave to suggest to you, that the duties connected with my office, I fear, cannot be reconciled with an attendance on Parliament, and I am fully persuaded that in the present situation of this country my very humble services can be made most useful to his Majesty's Government by my residence in it. You will, I am sure, carry in your recollection the feeling which was entertained on this subject when your kindness first introduced me into office, and I trust that the regard which I flatter myself you entertain for me, will aid you to use your influence with Lord Grenville not to urge a request which, if persevered in, I cannot so far forget what I owe to his Majesty's Government as to decline.

I will only generally say, that my professional situation is my independence, and that it must be materially injured, if not altogether sacrificed by my even occasional absence. You will feel, without my urging it, how well-founded my reluctance is to endanger a situation in which I am firmly placed, and expose myself to a new scene with which I am entirely unacquainted. These considerations are enforced by no less than ten arguments which are not the less powerful from being all of them under the age of discretion. I hope that I should not be disposed to let private motives have undue weight in any case when the exercise of a public duty was called for.

W. C. P.

Letter from Lord Grenville to Mr. Plunket.

Downing Street,

SIR, *December* 20, 1806.

Mr. Wickham has communicated to me your answer to the letter which he was so good as to write to you at my request. Although I have no personal claim to press the subject upon you, yet I am so much impressed with the advantage which we should derive from your assistance in the House of Commons in the conduct of the Irish business that I cannot help feeling extremely anxious that you should make, at least for this session, the experiment how far your attendance in Parliament can be made consistent with your public and private convenience, both which there would undoubtedly be every disposition to consult.

I have the honour to be, sir,

Your most faithful, and most obedient humble servant,

GRENVILLE.

The Attorney-General of Ireland.

The following letters were written immediately after Mr. Plunket had rejected the offer of the Attorney-Generalship under the Duke of Portland's administration.

Letter from Mr. Plunket to Mr. Wickham.

MY DEAR SIR, *May* 5, 1807.

I this day received your note of the 2nd of May, accompanying Lord Grenville's communication of the 29th of April. Of course no hesitation has remained on my mind, and I have informed Sir Arthur Wellesley and Lord Hawkesbury of the impossibility of my continuing any longer in office, assuring them at the same time of the strong sense I entertain of the liberality of their conduct towards me in making the proposal, and of their delicacy in the manner and terms of it. I must request of you to inform Lord Grenville and Lord Howick, how deeply I feel the kind and warm sentiments which they express with regard to my conduct. I have only to regret that my mind has been led to view the late proposals made to me in a light different from that in which it has struck theirs. As my resignation is now irrevocably disposed of, I will communicate to you my sentiments on the subject with more frankness than I could have used when the question was open, and I might have appeared to advocate my own interests. I was introduced to office in the administration of Mr. Addington; I was continued and promoted in that of Mr. Pitt, and I was continued in that of the late Ministers. All these, the two latter particularly, were governed by very different politics, not only with regard to the Empire, but especially with regard to Ireland; and my office, although a highly confidential one as a

law office, was not thought to involve, and in fact did not involve, any political confidences which either made it unworthy on my part to hold it, or on the part of those successive administrations to continue me in it.

When I was reluctantly brought into Parliament, my own opinion was that the office ought to be unpolitical: it had been so much so that until the evening before my setting off for London to take my seat in Parliament in February last, the name of the Catholic question had not been mentioned to me by the Irish Government.

When the late difficulties arose, you thought that I might retire from Parliament and continue in office, and so Lord G. very kindly expressed not only his acquiescence, but his wishes. I however felt that having come into Parliament, having voted on the introduction of the Catholic Relief Bill, and having so far consented to become a politician, not as being a law officer but as a member of Parliament, it would be mean in me to shrink from the consequences of the situation which I had yielded to be placed in, and I accordingly took my part without any apprehension of consequences. When after this it was proposed to me to retain my office without relinquishing those opinions which I had publicly declared, or giving any political pledge, I did think that I was placed exactly where I had been before I was brought into Parliament, and that the resignation of my seat would have removed every difficulty. Those were my opinions, and I own they are not altered, further than my unfeigned respect and confidence in the opinions to which I have referred must make me distrust my own, especially when my own interests were concerned, and I therefore do not claim the merit of having sacrificed my office to principle, but to character.

I would not run the risk of having it thought possible by Lord G., Lord H., or yourself, that I had trifled with them, or acted from an unworthy motive for any possible political advantage; and I certainly feel my mind more at ease in having lost my office than it could have been in retaining it with any further expectation of promotion, whilst a doubt could have remained on their minds on the subject. I write to you thus fully from an anxiety to stand well in the opinion of those to whom I have yielded my own, and because I have a right to wish that in the sacrifice which I have made I should carry along with me their approbation without any kind of doubt or drawback resting upon it. I have now dismissed this unpleasant subject for ever, and shall feel as little concerned as if I never had or had lost an official situation.

I am, my dear Sir,
Yours always most faithfully,
W. C. P.

Letter from Lord Redesdale to Mr. Plunket.*

Harley Street, May 12, 1807.

MY DEAR SIR,

I cannot express to you the regret I feel at your final determination to resign your office. I feared the consequences of your having been prevailed upon to take a seat in Parliament, from which it had been my particular wish that the law officers of the Crown in Ireland should be exempted; and when urged by Mr. Wickham, I had strongly objected to it as highly injurious to the individuals, and tending to make the Bar of Ireland again

* John Freeman Mitford, Lord Redesdale, born 1748; Attorney-General for England, and afterwards Chancellor of Ireland (1802-1806); died 1830.

a field for political interest; and to render promotion the reward of political services, instead of being the reward of those professional labours which best qualify men for the highest legal situations.

I had flattered myself with the hope that time would have rendered the Irish Bar, removed from political distraction, of the highest repute in the law of the country, to which their studies, as well as their abilities, might be exclusively applied. It is not for me to discuss the propriety of the decision of those who have led you to form a different decision from that which I had once hoped you might have adopted; though I must confess that when you informed me of your intention to seek the opinion of others, I had very faint hopes that you would be permitted to act as I could have wished.

It gives me much pleasure to add that his Majesty's Ministers, whilst they lament your decision, and think that you ought to have been permitted, retiring from Parliament, to pursue without regard to party the road in which you were, are convinced that what you have finally resolved to do is the result of feelings with which they have no right to quarrel. When they retired from office on the death of Mr. Pitt it gave them pleasure to think that the men whom they had selected for the Crown offices in the law were found by their successors the most fit to hold those situations; and that their removal would have been generally disapproved in Ireland. So far, therefore, were they from wishing you to retire, that it was their wish that you should remain in office, and give to their successors that assistance which they had no doubt would be highly beneficial to the public; and the same reasons which induced them to wish your continuance in office under these successors, induced them also to wish your continuance in office when they were

again called to the government of the country. I strongly incline to say much to you confidentially, on your own account. I dare not say all that occurs to me; but a long knowledge of some men who perhaps have most contributed to your final decision, compels me to think that I should not faithfully discharge to you the duties of a private friendship if I should forbear earnestly to intreat you, for the sake of yourself and your family, to consider your situation in the profession as an object too important to be easily sacrificed to expectations which may never be realized; and not to be easily persuaded that a further change is likely soon to take place, and therefore to be led to imagine that in sacrificing your professional advantages, the sacrifice will be short.

I feel myself that the false step I made in life was quitting my profession for the office of Speaker. I felt at the time that I sacrificed much; but I did not then know, as I now do, how much. Whatever may be the events of future years, I shall be anxious at all times to retain your good opinion and good wishes, and to prove to you that I am most sincerely, my dear Sir,

Your very faithful servant,

REDESDALE.

Lady Redesdale begs her respects to you and Mrs. Plunket, and hopes your family are all well.

The Right Honourable William C. Plunket.

It is at this time (when he joined Lord Grenville's party) that Plunket's career in imperial politics may be considered to have begun.

There was but one question of Irish policy at that time of first-rate importance—the Catholic question; and as the carrying of a measure of

Catholic relief was the greatest object of Plunket's political life and the topic of his most brilliant speeches, so was it the question to which the party of Lord Grenville was most entirely pledged. To this party he attached himself, and never afterwards abandoned it on any question of importance, following it too in its differences from other portions of the Liberal party as to the question of the war in 1815, and in the debate on the Peterloo Massacre in 1819.

By the influence of this party Mr. Plunket had been returned for Midhurst in the beginning of 1807, and the Parliament was dissolved in the April of the same year, so that he had only two months' experience of the House of Commons. During that period, however, he made a speech of which Whitbread said in the debate next year* "that it would never be forgotten." It is so miserably reported, that while the chain of the argument is broken at every link, the style is altogether unlike that either of his earlier or subsequent speeches. The report of his next effort (that in 1813, on the Catholic claims) was corrected by himself, and will give a true notion of the peculiarities of his style in the Imperial House of Commons.

* On Catholic claims, May 25, 1808.

CHAPTER VI.

SKETCH OF PLUNKET BY W. H. CURRAN—MENTAL CHARACTERISTICS—MANNER AND METHOD OF ARGUMENT—ADDRESS IN THE KING *v.* O'GRADY—BUSHE AND PLUNKET—EXTEMPORANEOUS ABILITY—PLUNKET'S OPINION OF GRATTAN—SOCIAL CHARACTER—FRIENDSHIP WITH BUSHE AND MAGEE—FRIENDSHIP WITH GRENVILLE, &c.—SIR WALTER SCOTT AT OLD CONNAUGHT—THE IRISH BAR—ANECDOTES—REPARTEE—PLUNKET'S GESTURE—DESCRIPTIVE LINES BY BULWER LYTTON.

MR. PLUNKET left Parliament in 1807, and did not return to it until 1812. In the interval he applied himself to his profession, securing the greatest name, and probably the largest income, that were ever obtained by an Irish barrister. Clients eagerly sought his advocacy in all kinds of cases, but it was in Chancery that he preferred to practise, not only because of the large fees which then rewarded the leading practitioners in that court, but also because his pre-eminence there was so complete that success cost him comparatively little exertion.* As a pleader before the common-

* For the information of English readers, it may be well to explain, that in Ireland barristers do not usually, at the outset of their career, select any one branch of the law for their peculiar study, and do not in any instance await their clients in their own chambers during the day. In Dublin, all the courts of equity and common law are gathered into one spacious building, known as the Four Courts; and under the same roof are to be found an admirable law library for the use of the Bar, and a spacious hall, in which

law judges, his reasonings were clear and convincing, even on the smallest and most technical points; and in conducting a *Nisi Prius* trial his great knowledge of men and his ready wit made him a terrible cross-examiner, while the lofty dignity of manner and the earnestness of voice and look which never forsook him gave life and effect to speeches the language of which might otherwise have seemed somewhat cold and severe to the not over-critical audience of the jury-box.

But it was in the Court of Chancery that the advocacy of Mr. Plunket was most remarkable in approaching the great principles of equity; in applying them to the details of the case in hand; in balancing conflicting rights; in extricating his cause from endless subtleties, or, if necessary, plunging it hopelessly into fresh complications of reasoning; in replying to a host of skilful adversaries, and drawing into one web the many threads of a long Chancery suit. In these difficult exercises of the logical faculty Plunket was unequalled amongst his contemporaries, and

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may every day be seen a large number of the public as well as of the wigged profession Of the latter class, some may be observed busily discussing with their attorneys the cases in which they are engaged; but a much larger number loiter about, seeking to while away the "fly-slow" hours of enforced leisure, and vainly hoping that something in the shape of business may come to them. It may be easily supposed that the "hall of the Four Courts" is the favourite resort of all kinds of wits, story-tellers, politicians, and scandal-mongers.

he seemed to rejoice in his great intellectual strength.

The following vivid sketch has been drawn by Mr. William Henry Curran, and is said by those who still remember Mr. Plunket at the bar, to be entirely accurate :—

Mr. Plunket has for some years past confined himself to the Court of Chancery, where he holds the same pre-eminence that our Romilly did in this country. Of all the eminent lawyers I have heard, he seemed to me to be the most admirably qualified for the department of his profession in which he shines. His mind is at once subtle and comprehensive; his language clear, copious, and condensed; his powers of reasoning are altogether wonderful. Give him the most complicated and doubtful case to support, with an army of apparently hostile decisions to oppose him at every step; the previous discussion of the question has probably satisfied you that the arguments of his antagonists are neither to be answered nor evaded; they have fenced round the rights of their clients with all the great names in equity—Hardwicke, Camden, Thurlow, Eldon. Mr. Plunket rises. You are deeply attentive, rather from curiosity to witness a display of hopeless dexterity than from any uncertainty about the event. He commences by some general undisputed principle of law, that seems, perhaps, at the first view not to bear the remotest relation to the matter in controversy; but to this he appends another and another, until by a regular series of connected propositions, he brings it down to the very point before the court, and insists, nay, demonstrates, that the court cannot decide against him, without violating one of its own most venerated maxims.

Nothing can be more masterly than the manner in which all this is done. There is no ostentation of ingenuity and research. Everything is clear, simple, and familiar; you assent without a struggle to each separate conclusion. It is only when you are brought to the ultimate result that you startle at discovering the consummate skill of the logician, who by wily and imperceptible approaches has gained a vantage point, from which he can descend upon his adversaries and compel them to abandon a position that was deemed impregnable. But Lords Hardwicke, Thurlow, Camden, &c., are said to be against him. The advocate accordingly proceeds to examine each of these authorities in detail; he analyses their language; by distinctions that seem natural and obvious, but which in reality are most subtle, he shows how capable it is of various interpretations; he confronts the construction contended for by conflicting decisions of the same judges on other and similar occasions. He points out unsuspected anomalies that would arise from adopting the interpretation of his adversaries, and equally unsuspected accordances with general principles that would follow his own. He thus goes on, until by reiterated processes of matchless sagacity, he has either neutralized, or absolutely brought over to support himself, all the authorities upon which his opponents most firmly relied; and he sits down, leaving the court, if not a convert to his opinion, at least grievously perplexed to detect and explain the fallacies upon which it rests.

. . . . . .

This velocity of creation, arrangement, and delivery is quite astonishing; and what adds to your wonder is, that it appears to be achieved without an effort. Mass after mass of argument is thrown off, conveyed in

phraseology vigorous, appropriate, and succinct; while the speaker, as if the mere minister and organ of some hidden power that saves him the cost of laborious exertion, appears solely anxious to impress upon others his own reliance upon the force of what seems to come unsought. This singular command over his great powers, coupled with his imposing exterior and masculine intonations, gives extraordinary weight to all he says. From his unsuspected earnestness of tone and manner, you would often imagine that his zeal for his client was only secondary to a deeper anxiety that the court should not violate the uniformity of its decisions by establishing a precedent fraught with anomaly and danger, while the authoritative ease and perspicuity with which he states and illustrates his opinions gives him the air, as it were, of some high legal functionary, appearing on behalf of the public, not so much to debate the question before the court as to testify to the law that should decide it. So that in respect to this quality of apparent conviction and good faith we may well apply to Mr. Plunket the words of Cicero in commendation of one of the ancient orators of Rome, nor will the illustration be found to fail from any want of coincidence in the personal characters of the two men. "In Scauri oratione, sapientis hominis et recti, gravitas summa et naturalis quædam inerat auctoritas, non ut causam, sed ut testimonium dicere putares."

The effect of Mr. Plunket's powers is greatly aided by his external appearance. His frame is tall, robust, and compact. His face is one of the most striking I ever saw, and yet the peculiarity lies so much more in the expression than in the outline, that I find it not easy to describe it; the features, on the whole, are blunt and harsh, there is extraordinary breadth and capacity of forehead, and when the brows are raised in the act of

thought, it becomes intersected with an infinite series of parallel lines and folds. Neither the eyes nor brows are particularly expressive, nor, indeed, can I say that any of the other features would singly indicate the character of the man, if I except a particular muscular largeness and rigidity about the mouth and lips, from which you may collect that smiling has never "been their occupation." The general character of Mr. Plunket's countenance is deep seriousness, an expression that becomes more strongly marked from the unvarying pallor that overspreads his features. It is literally the "pale cast of thought."

Of Mr. Plunket's knowledge of law it may be said he was not a great "case lawyer." He seems, indeed, to have had comparatively little respect for the more modern reporters.* In his early years, hard and careful study had given him a deep and intimate acquaintance with the older sages of the profession, and he always preferred in arguing his cases to go back to the ancient fountains, and rely on the broad principles of the common law; trusting to his own powers of analysis for taking the finer distinctions applicable to particular cases. He had besides the strongest disinclination to putting pen to paper, and never

* At that time there were no regular reports in Ireland, and the late decisions had to be imported from England. On one occasion, when Mr. Plunket had laid down a proposition upon which he meant to rest his case, the Lord Chancellor asked him, "Is that the law now, Mr. Plunket?" The latter replied, at the same time referring to his watch, "I know, my lord, that it was the law half an hour ago; but the packet from England has by this time arrived, and so I shall not be positive about it."

transacted any business by letter that it was possible to do by oral communication. The same aversion to the manual labour of preparation followed him into his profession; he always postponed it until the last moment, and often only read his briefs while driving in his carriage into Dublin from his country residence, a distance of about ten miles. He seldom noted his briefs at all, but had an extraordinary faculty of remembering fully and accurately what he once looked over. These considerations may in some degree explain why it was that his chamber practice never bore any proportion to his business in court.*

* An extraordinary instance has been told me of his power of extemporary reasoning. Mr. Plunket was engaged in a very heavy case in Chancery, in which my informant was employed as junior on the same side. Mr. Plunket, who had been attending Parliament, was detained in England longer than he had expected, and, in fact, did not arrive in Dublin until the morning upon which the case was to be argued. My informant says, "I called at Mr. Plunket's house to inquire whether he had yet arrived from England. I found that he had, and was just starting to walk down to court. He asked me to accompany him, and to explain to him the nature of the case, as he had not had time to open his brief. As we walked down to court, and while we were assuming our wigs and gowns, I told him as much as I could, and also suggested to him the line of argument that had occurred to me. All this time he never said a word to me, and when the case was called on, I certainly expected that Mr. Plunket would have applied to the Chancellor for a postponement, which would, of course, under the circumstances, have been allowed; but to my astonishment he rose and stated the case so fully and clearly, bringing out many of the points that I and the other counsel had failed to see on consultation, and so fully meeting the difficulties suggested by the other side, and so satisfying the doubts expressed by his lordship, that when, after more than an hour of this extraordinary exertion, Mr. Plunket sat down, he had so far established his case, that all the efforts of counsel on the other side were in vain, and the Chancellor decided for my client without calling for any further argument on his behalf."

With this aversion to intellectual drudgery Mr. Plunket combined extraordinary physical energy and vigour; he was a keen sportsman, and enjoying always excellent health, spent most of his leisure in out-of-door exercises. In his youth he suffered many hardships and privations, and throughout his public life had few opportunities for relaxation; yet, until he had long passed the "threescore years and ten," it might be truly said of him that he had never a day's illness. Whilst at the bar his objection to early rising was insuperable, and when pressed with business he sat up late into night; but when he left his profession and old age brought with it sleeplessness, he took to early hours, and after he had numbered more than eighty years, often strode vigorously through the pleasure grounds of Old Connaught at six o'clock in the morning.

It was not of course to be expected that Mr. Plunket, who could scarcely ever be persuaded to correct his parliamentary orations even on the most important questions, should have troubled himself to revise mere professional speeches; and yet he was seldom employed in any important cause without leaving behind him bright relics of the presence of his genius, and the court in which he pleaded was sure to be thronged with members of the Bar, anxious to learn from so great a master

of the forensic art. Lord Brougham has pointed attention to what he calls Mr. Plunket's marvellous power of literally translating argument into figure, and has instanced his illustration of the legal effect of long possession in creating a title to lands. It occurred in the course of his speech to the court and jury in a case tried in the Court of Common Pleas in Michaelmas term 1821. The Corporation of the University of Dublin brought a *quare impedit* against the then Primate of Ireland for the rectory of Clonfeacle, and the documents conferring an original title on the plaintiff (if any ever existed) having been lost, their case rested principally upon long and uninterrupted possession. The very words used by Mr. Plunket in illustration of his client's rights were,—"Time, while with one hand he mows down the muniments of our titles, with the other metes out those portions of durations which render unnecessary the evidence he has swept away." The professional reader will find the best record of the manner and method of Mr. Plunket's law arguments in the admirable report of the celebrated case, the King *v.* O'Grady, made by the late Baron Greene, then at the Bar. It is nearly all a mere legal disquisition, but I will select from it some passages in his lighter style.

The proceedings, which took place in November, 1816, were upon an information in the nature of a *quo warranto*, at the suit of the King against Mr. Waller O'Grady, who had been appointed to the office of Clerk of the Pleas in the Court of Exchequer, by his father, the Chief Baron. Mr. Saurin (Attorney-General) and Mr. Bushe (Solicitor-General) appeared to sustain the exclusive right of the Crown to make this appointment; Sergeant Burton and Mr. Plunket were retained by Mr. O'Grady. The trial at the bar, in the Court of King's Bench, Dublin, lasted eight days, and the verdict having been found for the Crown, it was removed upon a writ of error into the Court of Exchequer Chamber, where it was again argued at still greater length; and ultimately the decision of the court below was affirmed. Sergeant (afterwards Judge) Burton was probably the most learned lawyer that the Bar of Ireland ever produced, and Mr. Saurin was at the time considered second only to him in this respect; whilst between Plunket and Bushe, as advocates, it would have been difficult to adjudge a prize. The case excited the greatest interest. The court was crowded, and even ladies were to be seen in the galleries, attentively listening to the dry details of the argument.

In his address to the jury, Plunket commented

very severely upon the conduct of the Attorney-General in instituting these strange proceedings against a supreme judge for an act connected with the management of his own court; and certainly, if the Chief Baron were not manifestly in the wrong, the course pursued by the Attorney-General would have been unjustifiable, and calculated to bring the judicial authority into contempt. Perhaps in his attack upon Mr. Saurin, Plunket may have caught some additional heat from the recollection that his antagonist had then for ten years enjoyed the office which he had himself once held, and also from the many differences which existed between them on questions of party-politics and the administration of the Irish Government. He certainly delivered against him a most bitter and telling invective. Bushe struck in to the assistance of his colleague, and astonished even his warmest admirers by the deep and accurate knowledge of the law which on this occasion he combined with the graces of language and manner that were peculiarly his own; but before he commenced the argument of the case he made a brilliant and elaborate defence of Saurin's conduct against the charges brought by Plunket. He said:—

The weight of the censure which has fallen on us is increased in proportion to the height from which it has

descended. It has come from the counsel of a chief judge of the land; from the lips of one of the most illustrious individuals in this country; from a member of the United Parliament; from a man whose inimitable advocacy is but secondary to that high character for integrity and talent which he has established for himself and for our nation—upon whose accents the listening senate hangs—with whose renown the entire empire resounds. From such a man censure is censure indeed. I call then upon him not to stop half way in the discharge of his duty. If we are tyrannical and oppressive—if we have revived and transcended the worst precedents of the worst days of prerogative,—I call upon him in the name of justice and of our common country, I call upon him by every obligation which can bind man, to impeach us. Let him not stop at the charge which he has made in this place: let him follow it up. *Non progredi est regredi:* he must either with shame give up this unjust attack upon the servants of the Crown, or he must follow up his duty as a member of Parliament and carry us before the bar of the Commons.

Let him do so, we are not afraid—*there,* at least, the judicial determination shall not be upon the hearing of one party. Let him remember that the charge is illegality, Jacobinism, and revolution, and that the crime is disrespect to what he calls the adjudication of the Court of Exchequer! The very neighbourhood of Westminster Hall ought to make him pause. What! state within its precincts that a Court of Exchequer in Ireland had made a solemn determination in a case where one party was not present, and where the other presided! The very walls of Westminster Hall would utter forth a groan at such an insult to the judicial character—the very monuments would deliver up their illustrious dead, and the

shades of Mansfield, and of Somers, and of Holt, and of Hale, would start from their tombs to rebuke the atrocious imputation. I must call upon him to go on, but if he should, I tell this Wellington of the senate, he will do so at the peril of his laurels. I tell him they are foredoomed to wither at the root.*

The concluding passages of this extract were listened to with regret by many mutual friends of the combatants, but did not lead to any lasting feelings of irritation. Plunket was not slow to take up the challenge, and, when the case was reargued, administered this admirable rebuke :—

The Solicitor-General having passed upon me some most extravagant compliments, which no man can suppose I would be such an egregious dupe of inordinate vanity as to receive as merited, then calls upon me to step over to Westminster Hall, and to desire the House of Commons to decide whether this was a judicial act or not. And if, under the influence of this extravagance of praise, my head were to be so completely turned that I should actually go to St. Stephen's Chapel, for the purpose, he then tells me that "the very monuments would yield up their illustrious dead; and the shades of Mansfield and of Somers, of Holt and of Hale would start from their tombs to rebuke the atrocious imputation."

If I had been such a madman as to adopt the suggestions of my learned friend, and introduce in such

* Peel, then in Ireland, wrote of this speech to Mr. Abbot in terms of enthusiastic praise; but he added,—"No speech suffers so much from being reported as Bushe's, as he is a consummate master of oratory"

a place the descriptions of a legal point depending in the Court of King's Bench in Ireland, the shades of those illustrious persons, if they had any taste for the truly ridiculous, might have stepped down to amuse themselves, by seeing an Irish lawyer performing the part of Malvolio, cross-gartered and in yellow stockings, the victim of egregious vanity and folly. But if they had thought fit to deny that the swearing in the officers by the Court of Exchequer was a judicial act, I should have prayed in aid the shade of Sir Joseph Jekyll, who calls such an admission, in terms, a judicial act; I should have called on the shades of the learned judges who decided the cases in the Year Book of 9 Ed. IV. p. 6, in Dyer, 149, A. 150, 6, and in I. Anderson, 152. If these venerable spectres had not availed me, I should have called for the substantial assistance of the Solicitor-General himself, who, after a variety of splendid and figurative language, such as the rich imagery of his fancy supplied, ended at last by admitting it to be a judicial act. All these authorities I should have cited to the apparitions of Lord Somers, Lord Mansfield, and Lord Hale. But to Lord Holt I would say,—"You are the most impudent ghost that ever visited the glimpses of the moon, for you yourself did in your lifetime the very thing which you now start up to rebuke. My lords, the Solicitor-General has predicted that my laurels are foredoomed to wither at the root. I do not think I can lay claim to any laurels; and I am conscious, that if I ever put forth leaves they are already upon the sere. But, notwithstanding what has fallen from the Solicitor-General, I believe he would be disposed rather to regret their fall, than to rejoice at any untimely blight which stripped them off before their natural decay. What he has said has not excited any

resentment in my mind. As to the expressions "revolutionary" and "Jacobinical," he must know that they were not applied by me personally against any individual, but to a proceeding that appeared to me wholly unwarrantable in its nature and tendency. As to the Solicitor-General personally, I had no reason (nor have I to this moment) to believe that the proceeding was at all advised by him.

Tradition has preserved the record of another of the many passages of arms between these famous forensic gladiators. It occurred at the Carrickfergus summer assizes (I am not sure whether in the year 1799 or 1800). A justice of the peace for the county of Antrim, who was also a colonel of yeomanry, added to many other vices a libertinism which he practised heartlessly among the wives and daughters of his poorer tenantry. One of his victims, a young girl of eighteen, finding herself in a condition in which she had a claim at least for the protection of her seducer, applied to him for assistance. He not only refused this, but, on some frivolous pretext of complicity with the rebels, handed her over to his troopers to be scourged. His brutal order was too faithfully carried out. The poor woman died almost immediately after the infliction of the torture, having given birth to a still-born child. A highly-coloured account of this transaction was published by a gentleman residing in another part

of the same county, and an action of libel against the latter was the consequence. Plunket was brought over from the North-West to the North-East Circuit by the plaintiff, and Bushe was retained "specially" for the defendant. The plaintiff's case was managed so that Plunket should have the reply. Bushe succeeded, by cross-examination of the plaintiff's witnesses, in eliciting enough from them for the purposes of his speech to the jury, and he boldly adopted the plan of calling no witnesses on his side; not only relying on the effect that his address, if left unanswered, might produce upon the jury, but also hoping to save from the effects of cross-examination his client's character, which was, in fact, little better in many respects than that of the man he was said to have slandered. Plunket was thus deprived of his speech, as no reply was then allowed to the plaintiff in a case in which the defendant called no witnesses. The subject was peculiarly suited to Bushe's power of vivid narrative, deep pathos, and lofty denunciation, and in this case he is said to have surpassed all his previous efforts. Plunket, whose feelings were no longer braced up for the purposes of his reply, almost forgot his position as an advocate, and abandoned himself to the influence of the speaker so far, that when Bushe approached the close of his speech he perceived

that the sympathies of his great rival were deeply and evidently moved. He immediately took advantage of the effect he had produced, and, turning the attention of the jury to Plunket, exclaimed :—

> Gentlemen, perhaps I owe you an apology. The course I have adopted will deprive you of a pleasure to which you no doubt looked forward—the pleasure of listening to the splendid advocacy of my learned friend. Gentlemen, this was not a trick of mine to escape the effects of his matchless eloquence—no man admires that eloquence more than I do; but in this case I should not fear its influence; for you must have observed that on this occasion his feelings were too strong for his intellect. His noble nature could not condescend to the level of his client's case. I would set his heart against his head, and, as when the angel wrestled with the patriarch, I could not doubt for which victory would decide.

Long afterwards, Bushe, when Chief Justice, was fond of telling this story, and used to add,—

> The jury were locked up for the night; the next morning I was awakened by a knock at my door, and when I asked who was there, "It is I," said Plunket; "I came to tell you that *your ruffian* has got a verdict."

An instance of the versatility of Plunket's advocacy and of his great extemporary power occurred in the course of the election of 1818, when his return as member for the University of Dublin was contested by John Wilson

Croker. Mr. Croker was of course the Government candidate, and was backed by many who hoped for immediate blessings from patronage; but nearly all the scholars and many of the fellows supported Plunket, and succeeded in returning him by a narrow majority of four; thus vindicating the independence of the University. The votes used then to be recorded in the Examination Hall, and towards the end of the election the excitement of the crowd of students who were collected there became intense.

When the constituency had been nearly polled out, and Plunket had still a majority of only two, a young scholar named Logue came up to the table where sat the Provost, as returning officer, with the rival candidates. This young gentleman, when first canvassed by Mr. Plunket, had said that he was not of age, and could not, therefore, vote; and Mr. Plunket, having ascertained by the register of his father and mother's marriage that only twenty-one years and a few weeks had elapsed since their wedding-day, did not press him further. But some influence was afterwards brought to bear upon him, and he was induced to promise his support to Mr. Croker. He accordingly came forward to vote, and upon his being called upon to swear that he was of age "to the best of his belief," Mr. Croker explained

to him that it was not necessary to be so scrupulously precise as if required to swear positively. Mr. Plunket immediately started up and addressed him for some minutes, interrupted occasionally by the applause which burst from the large audience who listened intently to every word he said.

'Pause, I conjure you, young man, before you commit an act which must inevitably expose you to the suspicion, and very possibly stain you with the guilt, of the greatest crime that can be perpetrated against society and religion. I fling myself before you without a thought for my own interest, as I would rush before a suicide whose hand was raised for self-destruction.

I implore you as your father, as I would implore the child of my own loins, not to commit an act that must blast the days you are just commencing with shame and ineffectual penitence. The fact to which you are urged to swear is beyond the possibility of your own knowledge; you can only surmise it by what you have been able to hear and to collect. If all that you have been told or could discover concurred to make you think that you had attained your one-and-twentieth year, you would be justified in the deposition to which you are prompted, notwithstanding you know it not of your own personal knowledge. But in the present case, everything does not concur to make you think so; but quite the contrary, everything concurs to make you think otherwise, except your interest. Look at this register which I produce: how will you explain it? Will you impeach the veracity of an unerring record? It tells you that twenty-one years have scarcely elapsed since your father.

and mother were married. Have the ordinary laws of nature been suspended in your case? or will you precipitate yourself into manhood at the expense of your mother's virtue? [Cries of "Shame, shame!"] Do you not hear the voice of nature, that shudders at the thought? Do you not hear her cries in the indignant shouts that burst from every quarter of this agitated assembly? . . .

You must expect, if you take this oath, to be charged by the world with having forsworn yourself. They will not be persuaded that you swore through error, and not wilfully. They will not give credit to your honesty at such a monstrous imputation upon your understanding. Even if your interest were unconcerned in what you swear, they would not believe that you possessed the necessary certainty upon the subject. How much less will they believe, seeing, as they do, that it is so much your interest to swear it, whether you possess that certainty or not. Is the world ignorant, do you think, of the bad value to which the elective franchise has been raised in the University by the vilest and most unblushing system of corruption? Is it not notorious that within this very sanctuary of religion and of learning the most shameful apostacy and barefaced recreancy have dared to raise their heads; and is it thought, do you imagine, that these crimes are ever committed without the most powerful incentives? It is no slight inducement that will lead men of education, and in the rank of gentlemen, to encounter ignominy and public execration. It is notorious that, without the most powerful and irresistible temptation, the human mind will not pass at once into indifference of public reprobation, the last condition of depravity to which fallen virtue can descend? No! do not imagine it, they would not believe you were

mistaken, they would think your virtue yielded to your prudence, and that you entitled yourself to the privileges of a man by showing that you had the vices of the most depraved old age.

Again I implore of you to forbear. Let no man tempt you to lay perjury on your soul. Though the tempter undoubtedly participates in your crime, it is not diminished by that participation—it suffers no diminution by being divided. Remember, that by refusing to swear you only forego the exercise of a franchise; there is safety, there is honour on that side; the more valuable the right becomes, the more noble it becomes to relinquish it—to avoid even the suspicion of dishonour. Your decision is as yet in your own power: a moment more, and for myriads you could not recall it; it is as yet in your power to decide whether your conduct shall be held up to your fellow-students and to the world as an example to be followed, or perpetuated as an instance of what is to be execrated and avoided.*

This spirited appeal was received with loud acclamations by the assembly, and it had all the effect on Mr. Logue which it was intended to produce: he flung away the book and refused to be sworn.

The following passages also were spoken by Mr. Plunket from a hustings, but on a very different occasion and in a different style.

After the death in 1821 of the great Henry Grattan, who had for many years represented

* *Freeman's Journal*, July 3rd, 1818.

Dublin city, his son offered himself as a candidate to that constituency; he was opposed and defeated by Mr. Ellis, who was, strange to say, a Master of the Court of Chancery in Ireland. Plunket appeared on the day of nomination to propose as a member for the city of Dublin, the son of the man who had been in public and in private life his friend and idol. The following passages are extracted from a speech that was frequently interrupted by the violence of those deep feelings in the heart of the speaker, which, though seldom displayed in public, were never far from the seemingly cold and impassive surface of his nature. He said :—

Mr. Sheriff, I shall endeavour, as well as I can, to perform the mournful duty which has fallen to my lot.

[Here his utterance became quite choked, and after a struggle for a few moments against his feelings, he was overcome by their violence and burst into tears. As soon as he recovered some composure, he proceeded.]

My friend, the lord mayor, has pronounced a deserved panegyric upon my learned friend, Mr. Ellis. He has told you that he is a man of honour, of integrity, of independence, and to the justice of the panegyric, I most cordially subscribe. But when I heard my worthy friend say he was a fit person to succeed Henry Grattan, I felt the situation to which that gentleman was reduced: I felt the humiliation he was undergoing, when announcing Master Ellis as a fit person to represent Henry Grattan! If I were to stop here, and only pronounce that name

without further comment, I know ten thousand responsive feelings would burn in the breast of every man who regards the independence and honour of his country. But, sir, I must discharge my painful duty to my young friend—I cannot—I am unable—every affection of my nature is drawn back to the tomb of him who honoured me with his friendship.

[Here his powerful emotion again overcame him, and again the whole auditory sympathized in his sorrow.]

I would deem it sacrilege and impiety, if I were to suffer any feeling of faction or party to interfere with this solemn duty. When I see Protestants and Catholics intermingled in this assembly, I feel I am surrounded by friends, and cursed be the wretch who, by any art or expression, would endeavour to kindle the flames of contention amongst them. I do not now talk of Protestant or Catholic. It would be profanation to the dead to make any distinction. I came here to talk of Ireland! And never could I perform a duty more serviceable to my countrymen than to implore them not to degrade themselves by trampling on the ashes of their father and their benefactor. And I tell my learned friend, that I could never offer him a sincerer mark of friendship than by advising him to retire from a contest in which he could not triumph without sharing in the degradation of those who have thrust him forward. How I should compassionate his feelings, when, paraded through those streets, his memory would return to the days when that great man, now no more, passed those same streets, between the files of his countrymen, resting on their arms;—as it was well said, in admiration of his virtues—

> Even when proud Cæsar, 'midst triumphant cars,
> The spoils of nations, and the pomp of wars,
> Ignobly vain and impotently great,
> Show'd Rome her Cato's figure drawn in state,
> As her dead father's reverend image past
> The pomp was darkened and the day o'ercast ;
> The triumph ceased—tears gushed from every eye,
> The world's great *master* passed unheeded by ;
> Her last good man dejected Rome adored,
> And honoured Cæsar's less than Cato's sword.

When I look at my young friend who sits beside me, my mind is led back to the times when I saw his great father scaring and blasting with his lightnings the ranks of venality and corruption. It is led back to those hours when, disarmed of his lightnings, I beheld him in the bosom of his family, surrounded by innocence, and domestic tenderness. My young friend inherits those virtues—his father's image walks before him, and if a mean idea could enter his breast, he must be possessed of a boldness in infamy beyond the share of moderate degeneracy. If, then, it be asked what security exists for his parliamentary conduct, I will answer—"HIS NAME."

This was not the only occasion upon which the public were allowed a glimpse of those warm and intense affections which Plunket seemed habitually to take pains to conceal. For, as we shall find hereafter in the House of Commons, the memory of Henry Grattan again so far overcame his manhood as almost to move him to tears. And once afterwards, on the occasion of his farewell to the Bar, the powerful influence of old friendships and associations upon his feelings

was startlingly visible. Such manifestations of his really ardent nature were deeply remarkable, because of the severity of aspect and gravity of manner with which he was usually fenced about. No conclusion, however, could be more fallacious than one formed from the outward coldness of Mr. Plunket; for never was there a public man more entirely devoted to the enjoyments of the home-circle and of the society of personal friends. To all the members of his large family, but most of all to his wife, he was constantly and tenderly attached, and for many months after the death of Mrs. Plunket he was rendered wholly unfit for public business of any kind.

But certainly the most remarkable feature of Lord Plunket's private life was the constancy and intimacy with which he kept alive the friendships which he had formed in his youth. No doubt with not a few such alliances were easily maintained, because many of those with whom Plunket had been closely connected in his early life rose with him into positions of prominence and public service, and they were thus constantly brought in contact. But with the exception of a very few, who, like Wolfe Tone, were wholly separated from him in the outset of their career by their unfortunate participation in the rebellion of '98, I do not believe that Mr. Plunket ever forgot any of his

old companions, and abundantly is the gratitude and affection of the less fortunate of them evidenced in the private letters of congratulations and thanks that have come into my hands, written with a warmth and familiarity which proves the perfect frankness and generosity they had found at the hands of their friend and patron.

Between Chief Justice Bushe and Lord Plunket a friendship was begun in the rivalries and social meetings of the Historical Society, and ripened through long years of professional competition until they found themselves ranged together as Solicitor and Attorney-General. But Bushe was not a politician at heart and never sought a seat in the Imperial Parliament, and he gladly accepted the Chief Justiceship of the Queen's Bench when Plunket was for the second time appointed Attorney-General. Their old friendship never, except for one short interval, wavered, and whilst the exigencies of term-time kept them in Dublin, their intercourse was most constant and cordial. But so soon as the bands of professional obligation were relaxed Bushe hastened away to Kilmurry, there to preside over a circle of relations and friends whose talents and attractions made the society of the county of Kilkenny famous throughout Ireland, whilst Plunket could not be induced to leave his favourite haunt

at Old Connaught. As I have already mentioned, their friendship was still more closely cemented by the intermarriage of their children.

The life-long relations which existed between Mr. Plunket and Archbishop Magee were more curious and indeed romantic. Some time after the Rev. Mr. Plunket (the Chancellor's father) had begun his ministry in Enniskillen, Mr. John Magee, who had possessed considerable property in the neighbourhood but had become deeply involved, came to reside in that town. This gentleman had preserved from the ruin of his fortunes little save his honour and the small annuity of 100*l.* a year which his creditors, satisfied of his honesty, allowed him to retain. He took a house adjoining that of the Rev. Mr. Plunket, to whom he was much attached; a close intimacy between their wives naturally followed, and when either was obliged to leave home the other undertook for her children the kindly office of a mother, so that young William Magee was often nourished at the same breast as William Plunket, and they may be said to have begun life together rather as twins than as strangers. They played together as children, and studied together during their college career. Then Magee obtained his fellowship and set to work steadily to prepare the way for Plunket's candidature for

the College, though differing from him in almost all questions of politics and religion. It was in fact by the untiring exertions of Magee and his other most devoted friend, Peter Burrowes, that Mr. Plunket, without any other influence to back him, was returned in 1812; and afterwards, in 1818, defeated Mr. Croker, though the latter was supported by a most vigorous use of Government authority. I have already referred to the circumstances under which Mr. Plunket so narrowly gained this election, and when the result of the poll was declared to be in his favour, the excitement and exultation of the "independents" who had supported him knew no bounds. They carried him in triumph from the Tally-room in Trinity College to his house in Stephens' Green. Nearly all of them were his personal friends and acquaintances, and were entertained by him on that evening at dinner. Bushe sat on his right, and Magee, then Dean of Cork, upon his left. Mr. Plunket, on proposing the health of Mr. Bushe, concluded, "A friendship has existed between us from boyhood, whose serenity has been crossed but by the shadow of one fleeting cloud;" but when he came to give the name of Magee he hesitated, and then seeming to overcome all embarrassment, he began,—"I feel as if I were about to pronounce a panegyric upon myself

when I speak of my friend upon my left; there has been such a oneness of feeling between us that we have scarcely had a separate existence."

At that time, and long afterwards, Mr. Plunket lived in the house which is next to the archiepiscopal palace in Dublin, and their intimacy was uninterrupted save by one brief quarrel, which occurred shortly before the death of Magee. This "falling out of faithful friends" was complete while it lasted, but was afterwards forgiven and bitterly regretted by both. The following touching circumstance was told me by Mrs. Margaret Hunter, the eldest and favourite child of the archbishop. I give it in her own words:—

The last time I visited Old Connaught I took my eldest boy to see Lord Plunket, and he took us with him to see the pleasure-grounds and garden. As we walked and conversed he stopped short facing me, and said, "Margaret, your father would *once* have sacrificed his life for me." I replied, "My lord, he would have done so to the last hour of his life." He paused, with his hands behind his back, as his custom was, and looking full in my face, he said, "Margaret, I treated your father *very badly*," and tears dropped heavily on his shoes. I replied, "Well, my lord, he forgave you and loved you to the last, and trusted to meet you again where that quarrel might all be forgotten." He said, with solemn emphasis, "God grant it, God grant it." I never saw him again, as he was forbidden to converse with me, so much did it agitate him to refer to those bygone days.

It may be readily believed that besides these distinguished men, whom I may call Mr. Plunket's bosom friends, there were many others who joined in the charming society that he delighted to gather round him at his country-seat, Old Connaught, beautifully situated under the Sugar-loaf Mountains on the borders of the county of Wicklow. There too Henry Grattan often came from Tinnehinch, which was but a few miles distant, to spend "Attic nights," in whose pleasant hours the good old patriot himself half forgot the humiliation of the Union and the wrongs of the Catholics. For him Mr. Plunket had an almost filial reverence, and ever exerted himself to the utmost to brighten the declining years of his revered patron. After he had retired into private life, Lord Plunket often said, "During my long public life I have had opportunities of knowing many eminent persons, and I have been favoured with the friendship of some of them; but of all the men I ever met, Grattan was the greatest and the best." In England no less than in Ireland, Lord Plunket was most fortunate in obtaining the personal friendship and esteem of nearly all the eminent men with whom his public successes brought him into contact. Of these he most enjoyed the society of his political chief, Lord Grenville, and of Lord Brougham, his generous rival and often his deter-

mined opponent; whilst the entire confidence and mutual regard which existed between him and Lord Wellesley will be curiously evidenced throughout many of the following chapters. For Romilly too he entertained that affection and respect which all who knew him felt,* and in his

* I have found the following interesting letter amongst Lord Plunket's papers:—

"My dear Sir, "Gloster, Nov. 13, 1818.

"I had intended to send you a few lines after the truly grievous calamity which has lately befallen us, conceiving that it would be satisfactory to you and Romilly's other friends near you to learn one or two particulars beyond the extremely inaccurate account given before the coroner.

"I was prevented at first by indisposition, and then by the painful duty from which I am now on my return.

"There cannot be the least doubt that Romilly laboured under an attack of brain-fever (phrenitis) at the moment of his death. It may have been, probably was, brought on by the long want of sleep during his wife's illness; and it was unlucky that he was brought to town, instead of being kept quiet and stationary.

"The night before (Sunday) the physicians considered him in a dangerous state of mind, and in the night fever came on. At 8 in the morning two of the three agreed that bleeding and the application of ice to the head should be tried, and they waited to consult the third physician, who, upon the whole, and chiefly from considering the favourable appearance of perspiration which was then breaking out, deemed it advisable to delay the above applications for some hours. Why, under these circumstances, he was not watched better, and why such material facts as the above were suppressed before the coroner, are questions more easily asked than answered. You may rely on this statement, however, for I have it distinctly from two of the physicians, with other circumstances, which do not alter the inference. That he was in the first paroxysm of an incipient brain-fever seems quite clear. The act itself removes whatever doubt the previous symptoms might have left. While suffering under want of sleep, and while the malady was lurking about him, he felt apprehensive of some mental affection, and gave ample directions in writing for the care of his person and affairs during his incapacity.

"The codicils and testamentary papers written from time to time during the last three weeks of his life, were singularly marked by all his most

latter days he was received with very flattering kindness and respect in the famous society of Holland House. But much as Lord Plunket was gratified by the intimacy of these distinguished men, it never weaned him from his old friendships in Ireland, and with all imaginable excuses he put off the invitations with which they sought to lure him in his leisure hours away from his favourite retreat at Old Connaught.

Amongst the many brilliant circles that Plunket in his happiest days drew around him under his hospitable roof, none was more gay

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amiable qualities and by the best judgment; it is enough to say that they even raise him in the estimation of those who knew him well before. He has left many papers, containing the materials of a work which he meditated upon Criminal Law, and has desired us to publish any parts we may deem useful, or to give them to aid any one likely to treat the subject himself; and in making selections for publication he desires that no regard may be paid to his fame as an author or as a lawyer, but the probability of usefulness alone may be considered.

"These few particulars may interest yourself and Mr. Grattan, Sir J. Newport, and one or two others, to whom, if you please, pray show them.

"He was interred with Lady R. last Wednesday, in the small country church in Radnorshire where they had been married nearly twenty-one years before. The two bodies lay during the service in the usual place before the altar, on the same spot where they had stood together upon the former occasion. The funeral was exceedingly private, according to his own directions, being only attended by Lord Lansdowne, Mr. Windham, and myself, beside the nearest relations and two or three neighbours.

"It is useless to repine; one may go on struggling and endeavouring to do one's duty, but it is in vain to deny that everything now wears a new face, and that these terrible blows, following so quickly on each other, and the last so much heavier than all the rest together, quite wean us from life.

"Believe me,

"Yours faithfully,

"H. BROUGHAM."

and genial than that which assembled when Sir Walter Scott made Old Connaught his head-quarters whilst enjoying the scenery of the county Wicklow. The agreeable impressions left upon Sir Walter's mind by this visit have been recorded by Lockhart, and I have found a copy of the following letter written by Plunket in acknowledgment of a copy of Scott's *Life of Napoleon*, which was sent him by the author.

Letter from Lord Plunket to Sir Walter Scott.

Old Connaught, Bray,
September 3, 1827.

MY DEAR SIR,

I received your *Napoleon* when I was on the eve of setting out for circuit, and I postponed returning thanks until I should have an opportunity of realizing my expectations of satisfaction in the perusal. I have read it rather too greedily for digestion, but sufficiently to have derived great pleasure and information. I did not come to the work with the absurd expectation of finding secret sources of information, or any particular novelty in your materials; but I did look for that in which I have not been disappointed—impartial truth and happy illustration, luminous arrangement and wise reflections. You have recalled very vividly to my mind the hideous dream of the French Revolution, yet I truly own you have not enabled me to comprehend the means by which its various stages were carried, so as to leave my mind at ease as to the recurrence of similar horrors if occasion should present itself. I do not mean by this to express any immediate apprehensions. As to Napoleon, you have the satisfaction, which you must have fully

anticipated, of being cried out against by his friends and enemies. I do not count myself in the ranks of the latter, and feel no disposition to join in reviling fallen grandeur; still I cannot but think that your picture is a more favourable one than I can make up out of the features which in the detail you have so justly traced. I fear that in his magnificent composition nature forgot the heart. His vice was not merely selfishness, but self-willedness, which, when it attains its perfection, as I think it did in him, is nothing more or less than the principle of evil. This does not imply a love of blood, or a gratuitous pleasure in the misery of others, but simply a determination not to be controlled in the exercise of self-will, either by respect for God or compassion for man. I cannot, on the casual indications which you report of his misgivings as to the existence of a Creator, persuade myself that he considered himself an accountable being. He seems to have, indeed, not felt "destiny" a comfortable pillow for adversity to rest upon, but his utter disregard for truth to the very last, and the total absence of any compunctious visitations, are irreconcilable with the notion of any submission to Providence. Milton's hero was, on the whole, a better sort of person than yours. He showed "signs of remorse and passion" to behold the "millions for his fault amerced," "yet faithful here they stood."

I am very much obliged to you for the tribute you pay to poor Castlereagh; no one but yourself has ventured to visit his unfortunate tomb with any kindly feeling. Pray accept my thanks for your valuable present, and may I request you to present my regards, and those of my family, to Miss Scott.

I am, my dear Sir,

Your obliged and faithful servant,

PLUNKET.

The reader will not, I am sure, imagine that because Plunket's style of speaking was grave and massive on great occasions, that he was incapable of playing the orator in smaller arenas. Some of his earliest triumphs were won as prisoner's counsel upon circuit, and it is recorded that on an occasion when he defended a guilty horse-stealer in his native town of Enniskillen he showed such consummate tact that one of the fraternity who happened to be present exclaimed in a paroxysm of delight,—"Long life to you, Plunket! The first horse I steal, boys, by Jekers I'll have Plunket."

In the days of which I am writing, the character of a wit and humourist was sought for almost as eagerly by the members of the Irish Bar as a reputation for able advocacy or sound knowledge of law; and surely a group of social companions as gay and genial might have been gathered from that sage profession as ever perhaps were collected together in any community of men. When Plunket was called to the Bar, John Philpot Curran was delighting society no less by the magic of his wit than by the splendour and pathos of his eloquence; and before he was raised to the Bench, O'Connell, in all the plenitude of his copious imagination and in the reckless frolics of his humour, made even the law courts re-echo

with laughter. Charles Bushe and Doherty were his co-mates at the Bar, and Chief Baron O'Grady and Chief Justice Norbury, if they did not elevate the dignity, certainly relieved the dulness of judicial life, by the merriment which they tolerated and often set agoing in their courts. In this brilliant society Plunket was considered a wit and humourist of the first class, and many are the stories still told in the old hall of the Four Courts of the ready repartee with which he delighted or bewildered the Bar and the Bench.

On one occasion Lord Avonmore was trying a case at *Nisi Prius*, and Plunket had almost succeeded in breaking down an important hostile witness, when the latter sought refuge under an assumed incapability of understanding the questions, complaining in Celtic English "that the counsellor had bothered him entirely and given him the *maigrims*" (megrims.) "Maigrims?" asked Lord Avonmore. "I never heard that word before." "My lord," answered Plunket, "the witness says I have given him the megrim, a well-known affection: merely a confusion of the head arising from a corruption of the heart."

When "all the talents" went out of office in 1807, and while the final arrrangements were being completed, whereby Bushe was to remain

Solicitor-General while Plunket resigned his office, a case was at argument. Mr. Bushe had finished speaking, and Mr. Plunket was to reply, but he was not in court. The judge asked, what was the cause of the delay? "I suppose," said Bushe, "Mr. Plunket is cabinet-making." The latter, who entered court at the moment, instantly replied,—"No, indeed, my lord, I am not nearly so well suited for cabinet-making as my learned friend. I was never either a turner or a joiner."

Sir Jonah Barrington has recorded the following anecdote:—"I never saw Lord Redesdale more puzzled than at one of Plunket's best *jeux d'esprit.* A bill was being argued in Chancery wherein the plaintiff prayed that the defendant might be restrained from suing him on certain bills of exchange, as they were nothing but *kites.* 'Kites!' exclaimed Lord Redesdale. 'Kites never could amount to the value of these securities! I don't understand this statement at all, Mr. Plunket.' 'It is not to be expected that you should, my lord. In England and in Ireland, kites are quite different things. In England the *wind* raises the *kites*, but in Ireland the *kites* raise the *wind.*' 'I do not feel any better informed yet, Mr. Plunket,' said the matter-of-fact Chancellor. 'Well, my lord, I'll explain the thing without mentioning

those birds of prey,' and therewith he elucidated the difficulty."

When the University election to which I have already referred was approaching, some one mentioned that Mr. Croker, who, as was well known, was using all possible artifices to ingratiate himself with the electors of the University, slept every night in the Provost's house. Mr. Plunket, who was present, promptly answered,—"I don't know about his sleeping, but I dare say he often *lies* there."

Long afterwards, on the day on which Lord Campbell was expected to arrive from England for the purpose of assuming the chancellorship which Plunket had been compelled to resign in his favour, the weather proved very rough, and a friend of Plunket's suggested that the new Chancellor would probably be very sea-sick whilst crossing the Channel. "Yes," said Plunket, "but it won't make him *throw up* the seals." But one pun more for the classical reader. In the year 1827 the conduct of Mr. Spring Rice was found to be very embarrassing by the Government. Lord Norbury, whose tenure of office as Chief Justice of the Common Pleas seemed to depend upon the lasting powers of the Ministry, met a friend, supposed to be full of political information, and asked him, "Risum (*Rice-um*)

teneatis amici?"* Plunket, who heard this repeated, observed,—"That is a very bad joke, but it might have been made a worse one for his lordship by quoting from the same author,—"Solvuntur *risu* tabulæ, *Tu missus abibis*."†

I have selected these trifling stories as the best authenticated of a thousand witticisms that are referred to Plunket, and with which it would be easy to fill a chapter. But jokes, no matter how good at the moment they are uttered, fall flat when read in cold blood and separated from the circumstances out of which they arose.

Plunket was by no means a professed story-teller, like Chief Justice Doherty, nor yet had he the incessant play of graceful fancy, or the fascinating *bonhomie*, which made the conversation of Chief Justice Bushe so delightful. Whatever may have been the original bias of his mind, the stern struggle with poverty which, in his earlier years, he had to wage, must have given it a serious bent, and the stirring events, social and political, that surrounded him in youth, and the cogitation of great questions of State, with which his intellect was in maturer years occupied, no doubt lent to his character a peculiar gravity. In public his wit was more of a rapier than a foil, and his jokes

* HORACE. *Ars Poetica*, 1-5. † *Ib.* Sat. ii. i. 84-86.

were almost as much to the point as his arguments. It was in private—in his family circle, or in the company of his intimate friends—that he showed the vein of rich and pleasant humour which he really possessed.

I cannot pass away from the habits of Lord Plunket's professional and private life without noticing one very remarkable and characteristic piece of action which he often used while speaking, especially at the close of any great period of his argument. It was that of raising both hands slowly high above his head, and then bringing them down at the same moment, and with extraordinary force. Except this strange gesture which in most other speakers would have seemed uncouth, but was in his case much in keeping with the stern simplicity and force of his style, he used but little action, often going on for long periods without moving his hands. Sir Bulwer Lytton has described this curious action, and vividly reproduced the effect of his appearance and manner as a speaker above referred to in the following spirited lines :—

> But one there was to whom with joint consent
> All yield the crown in that high argument.
> Mark where he sits ; gay flutterers round the Bar,
> Gathering like moths attracted by the star.
> In vain the ballet and the ball invite :
> E'en beaux look serious—Plunket speaks to-night.
> Mark where he sits, his calm brow downward bent,
> Listening, revolving, passive, yet intent.

Revile his cause: his lips vouchsafe no sneer;
Defend it: still from him there comes no cheer,
No sign without of what he feels or thinks;
Within, slow fires are hardening iron links.
Now one glance round, now upwards turns the brow.
Hushed every breath; he rises—mark him now!
No grace in feature, no command in height,
Yet his whole presence fills and awes the sight.
Wherefore? you ask. I can but guide your guess.
Man has no majesty like earnestness.
His that rare warmth—collected central heat—
As if he strives to check the heart's loud beat,
Tame strong conviction and indignant zeal,
And leave you free to think as he must feel.
Tones slow, not loud, but deep-drawn from the breast,
Action unstudied, and at times suppress;
But as he neared some reasoning's massive close,
Strained o'er his bending head, his strong arms rose,
And sudden fell, as if from falsehood torn
Some gray old keystone and hurled down with scorn.
His diction that which most exalts debate:
Terse and yet smooth, not florid, yet ornate;
Prepared enough; long meditated fact
By words at will made sinuous and compact
With gems the genius of the lamp must win,
Not scattered loose, but welded firmly in,
So that each ornament the most displayed,
Decked not the sheath, but harden'd more the blade:
Your eye scarce caught the dazzle of the show
Ere shield and cuirass crashed beneath the blow.

Blackwood's Magazine.

CHAPTER VII.

REPRESENTS DUBLIN UNIVERSITY—HISTORY OF CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION—THE PENAL CODE—CONCESSIONS TO ROMAN CATHOLICS—PROPOSAL TO CONCEDE THE VETO—THE VETO CONCEDED TO THE CROWN—PITT'S WANT OF FIRMNESS—"NO-POPERY" FEELING IN ENGLAND—MEETING IN DUBLIN—GRATTAN'S SPEECH—PITT'S DEATH—PERCEVAL'S MINISTRY—LORD HUTCHINSON'S LETTER—O'CONNELL'S AGITATION—ENGLISH PUBLIC OPINION—THE PENAL STATUTES—PLUNKET'S SPEECH.

IN April, 1807, the Duke of Bedford came into office, and immediately dissolved Parliament.

Mr. Plunket did not put himself in nomination at the general election that followed, nor did he return to the House of Commons until 1812. His reason for adopting this course was that he did not think it would be possible, consistently with a regular or even occasional attendance in Parliament, to realize an independence from purely professional (*i. e.*, unofficial) sources.

His party were of course anxious to have his assistance in the House of Commons. George Ponsonby, then the leader of the Opposition, wrote to him in March, 1808, offering him (on behalf of Lady Downshire) a return for the borough of Newry; and again in November, 1809, Lord Grenville proposed, in the most

flattering terms, that he should accept the nomination of the Duke of Bedford for one of the seats then in the gift of his Grace. Both these offers Plunket, with many expressions of gratitude, thought proper to decline. In 1812, however, when he had so far prospered at his profession as to have secured a considerable fortune, and his position had been rendered still further independent by a bequest of 60,000*l.* from his brother (Dr. Plunket), he put himself in nomination for Dublin University; and on his return to Parliament enrolled himself again amongst the followers of Lord Grenville, taking his seat with them on the Opposition benches.

There was no doubt at the time a prevalent impression in political circles that so soon as the period during which the Regency was to continue under the restrictions should have run out, the Prince would renew his connection with the leaders of the Liberal party. In this respect, however, that party were disappointed. The nature of the advances which the Prince did actually make to his old friends, and how they were met, will fully appear from the following letter:—

Lord Grenville to Mr. Plunket.

DEAR SIR:— *Camelford House, Feb.* 15, 1812.

It had generally been supposed that on the expiration of the restrictions it was the intention of the Prince

Regent to make some overtures to the persons composing the opposition. Two days ago he wrote to the Duke of York a letter* which in the terms of it appears to have been intended to be communicated only to Lord Grey. The Duke himself apprised us verbally that he was directed to make the communication jointly to us both, and he did so. The perfect agreement which subsists between Lord Grey and myself makes such a point wholly unimportant, except as some indication of the spirit in which the step was taken. I thought it utterly unworthy of being even remarked upon. Our answer has therefore been this day jointly returned.

The P. R.'s letter is for the most part a detail of the grounds on which he has acted in retaining the present Ministry in their situations and of the success which he thinks has attended the experiment of restricted regency.

But in the concluding paragraph he intimates a wish that "some of those persons with whom the early habits of his public life were formed would strengthen his hands and constitute a part of his Government," and then adds something of the advantage of a "vigorous and united administration formed on the most liberal basis."

Our answer has this day been delivered. It is, as you may well suppose, a decided negative. It disclaims all personal exclusions, but states distinctly that differences exist on public measures too many and too important to leave any possibility of our uniting with the present Government; an agreement of sentiment on the public interests being the only fit basis for an honourable union of parties opposed to each other.

* The letter of the Prince Regent to the Duke of York here referred to, and the answer returned by Lords Grenville and Howick, have already been published in the *Life of Grattan* by his son, pp. 599-601, vol. v., and in the *Court of the Regency*, by the Duke of Buckingham, vol. i. p. 225.

We then speak of the affairs of Ireland as the most important and pressing of these—and declare our decided opinion that a total change of the system of government there, and the immediate repeal of the civil disabilities of the Catholics, are necessary, without which we can have no hope of rendering our services useful to H. R. H. or to the country.

This is shortly the substance of the two papers, and I flatter myself our answer is such as all our friends must approve. I write in much haste, but I was anxious to put you in possession of these facts, and I allow myself to hope that you will concur in the feelings and opinions under which we have acted.

I am, dear Sir,

With the greatest esteem and regard,

Your most faithful and obedient humble servant,

GRENVILLE.

In following Plunket's career through the remainder of this book, we shall trace it principally by means of letters and speeches having reference to the struggle for Catholic Emancipation, from the year 1813, when, for the first time, a majority was obtained for that measure in the House of Commons, until it received the King's assent in 1829. It may, therefore, be well to review the earlier history of the question; for the important disabilities under which Roman Catholics suffered at the beginning of this century, and which were then of a political character, remained as relics of a system of oppressive laws

that had once pursued "the Papists" into every relation of life.*

The penal code was first put in force in Ireland at the close of the seventeenth century, when the long political and religious struggles which had distracted the nation for fifty years had ended in the triumph of the party whose principles were those of the Reformation and the Revolution. In Ireland this party, though superior to their enemies in energy, education, and wealth, and backed by the power of England, formed an inconsiderable minority of the population; and the system of government they adopted seems to have been dictated by their necessities and their fears. The masses of the people were hopelessly hostile. Should these masses at any time combine, their immense numbers must render them formidable. It was, therefore, determined to guard against

* The appellations used by the Legislature for this class of Her Majesty's subjects have curiously varied. From the time of the introduction of the Protestant creed into Ireland (temp. Elizabeth) to that of William III., the words used in the statutes appeared to have been "persons in connexion with the Church of Rome." In the commencement of the reign of William III. (viz. 1692) the Catholics were expelled the Irish Parliament: a hostile phraseology then appeared. Papist, popish people, etc., are to be found in all statutes affecting the Catholics from 7 William III. to 32 George III. inclusive, and even later. The 33 George III. at length styles them "papists, or persons professing the Roman Catholic religion." However, the latest statute relating to the Catholics drops the harsher names, and by its title denominates them "Roman Catholics." This may therefore be taken to be their legal description at this day.—(1812.)—SCULLY'S *Penal Laws*, p. xxvii.

such a chance by keeping them in a helpless state of poverty and ignorance. This policy was, in fact, the same as that used by the Norman conquerors of England towards the vanquished Anglo-Saxons. The penal code breathed in every clause the spirit of the curfew.

The Roman Catholic was forbidden, under heavy penalties, to worship according to the ritual of his religion. He was not allowed to educate his children while he lived, or to appoint guardians for them when he died. He could not inherit estates from his ancestors, or acquire them by purchase himself, and even his personal property was not always safe. For any violations or pretended violations of these oppressive enactments, the most respectable member of this proscribed sect was left a prey for the meanest informer, and made subject to heavy penalties, so that it was said, "that you might track the Irish Papist through the Statute-book, as you would follow a wounded man through a crowd, by blood."*

This mediæval scheme of repression and exclusion was, of its kind, probably as perfect as any that human ingenuity could have devised;

* To have exterminated the Catholics by the sword, or expelled them like the Moriscoes of Spain, would have been little more repugnant to justice and humanity, but incomparably more politic.—HALLAM'S *History of England*, Vol. III. p. 401, eighth edition.

but the eighteenth century, was not an age in which the success of such a system was possible. Like the persecuted Hebrews, the proscribed Catholics secretly amassed wealth, and stealthily acquired information; they stole from the forbidden tree, but the fruit of knowledge was bitter in their mouths.

The Catholic [says Mr. Wyse] was educated in defiance of penalty, in the face of persecution, he was educated under every restriction of the penal law. The seed became more precious for what it had cost; with the knowledge he had *acquired* he felt fully how much that knowledge had been prohibited. He opened the history of his country with the Catholic priest on one side and his own Catholic family on the other, for his commentators and interpreters, stinging him onward at every line to some new and exciting conclusion.

The penal laws continued in full force until the year 1774, when the Legislature framed an oath to be taken by Roman Catholics, which, though sufficient as a formal test of loyalty, did not involve any article of faith or speculative opinion. Four years afterwards they were allowed to take leases of land for 999 years, to enjoy all such estates as should be left or transferred to them, and to dispose of them by will or otherwise, "as in the case of other people."

In 1782, when the liberal opinions of the national party were in the ascendant, and Grat-

tan's influence swayed the counsels of the Irish Parliament, a measure of much larger relief was granted.

The acquisition of lands by purchase, as the lands of Protestants, was communicated to the Roman Catholics. Some of their disabilities as to education were removed. The severe law was repealed that compelled the Papists to declare on oath when, where, and by whom they heard mass celebrated. The unequal attachment of their properties to make reprisals for common robberies was discontinued. Their horses were no more to be exposed as public plunder; and the preposterous but offensive prohibition whereby persons professing the Popish religion were forbidden to reside in certain cities was abolished; they were allowed the full rights of property, the free exercise of their religion, and to appoint guardians to their own children.*

Ten years afterwards the friends of the Roman Catholics in the Irish House of Commons pressed for further concessions. It was proposed that they should be allowed to practise as attorneys and barristers, that education should be given to them without any restraint, and that their intermarriages with Protestants should be legalized.

These propositions met with a desperate opposition from the dominant party; but in the next year (1793) Mr. Pitt induced the Irish administration to carry them through both Houses of

* Speech of Sir H. LANGRISHE in the Irish House of Commons, 25th January, 1792.

Parliament, and along with them an Act granting the famous 40*s.* freehold franchise. This last provision had little effect in conferring political influence on the Roman Catholics, as the advantages derived from it were not vested so much in those who possessed the freehold, as in those who possessed the freeholder.

The immediate consequence of these concessions was to still the clamour and tranquillize the feelings of the Roman Catholics; their ultimate effect was to make resistance to further demands more difficult. Such changes also caused much disgust to many who either felt their religious and political principles hurt by them, or believed that their vested interests were likely to be affected, while even the lull in political agitation did not last long. I have already mentioned the circumstances connected with Lord Fitzwilliam's recall from the post of Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and shown how it was taken as the signal for a renewal of sectarian conflict. But I must now notice another remarkable consequence of that decisive act. While the lower order of the Roman Catholics were thrown into the arms of French revolutionary agents, the wealthier classes, including the Hierarchy, who had, of course, no sympathy with radical changes, began to look for improvement in their condition rather to the liberality of an

English Ministry, than to the Irish Parliament. It was believed by them, and this has been since put beyond doubt, that it was under the pressure of the Irish Protestant party, then represented by Lord Clare, that the English Cabinet gave way upon the question of Lord Fitzwilliam's recall. This consideration will help to explain the ease with which Lord Cornwallis prevailed with the Roman Catholic Episcopacy to lend him their assistance in carrying the Union, without any distinct assurance on his part that the terms which they demanded would be conceded.

It is most important in judging of the conduct of the Catholic body, but more especially of their ecclesiastical leaders, throughout the long years during which their great measure was bandied about in the Imperial Legislature, to bear in mind the first experience they had of that assembly after their national Parliament had ceased to exist. No one who reads the political correspondence that passed on the subject of the Union, and has since been published, can doubt that there was a time when the success of that measure seemed to hang upon the part taken with regard to it by the leaders of the Catholics. It is also certain that the Irish opposition were prepared to go great lengths to secure the assistance of that body; on the other hand the friends of Govern-

ment, by officially encouraging their hopes, produced a favourable impression in some parts of the country. This no doubt seemed to imply a promise that if at the critical moment the Catholics assisted the Government to carry the Union, the latter would not be found wanting to their friends when their claims should become a question of Imperial policy. Lord Cornwallis evidently felt the responsibility that such conduct must impose upon him. He had been forbidden to pledge the Government directly to support emancipation, and yet he found that unless he "flattered the hopes of the Roman Catholics the great measure of Union might miscarry." He consequently desired Lord Castlereagh to ascertain from the Cabinet Ministers how far he might honestly call for the assistance which it was so important for him to obtain.*

At the time that this indirect bargain was struck by the Roman Catholic prelates with the English Government, another negociation was in progress between the same parties. It was proposed that the Roman Catholic clergy should receive an annual stipend from the Crown, and

* The results of this measure are described by Lord Castlereagh in a letter written by him to Mr. Pitt, January 1, 1801. See *Cornwallis's Corr.*, Vol. III., p. 323, and an interesting account of these negotiations by one who was intimately connected with their progress, may be read in the report of Mr. Maurice FitzGerald's (Knight of Kerry) speech on the Catholic Claims debate, May 8, 1828, reported by Hansard.

that, in return for it, the Veto should be conceded. These arrangements were long deemed to be necessary conditions for the granting of emancipation by many of the warmest friends of that measure, and some of the deepest thinkers on the subject.*

The spirit in which the proposal of a similar stipend was received by the Irish prelates, cannot be better illustrated than by the statement of Lord Castlereagh, through whom on the part of Government the offer was made.

It is due to the Roman Catholic bishops at the same time to state that Government experienced on their part every facility in the inquiries which they had to make; they furnished them freely and without the appearance of distrust with any information they required; they showed

* It is plain that a State provision for the Catholic clergy of Ireland was an important element in the measure of relief by which Pitt intended the Act of Union should be accompanied. Lord Auckland wrote to Mr. Beresford in the year 1798, after a long conversation with Mr. Pitt on this subject. "The whole system of needy and illiterate and disaffected papist priests ought to be put down, giving to the sect not an establishment, but respectable and responsible men of their own persuasion paid handsomely by the State." The writer goes on to make some inquiries of Mr. Beresford with respect to the extent and sources of the revenues of the Established Church, more especially as to the proportions in which various classes and the members of different creeds were subject to the payment of tithes."—*Auckland Memoirs*, vol. iv. p. 42. See also *Historical Memoirs of the English, Irish, and Scotch Catholics since the Reformation*, by CHARLES BUTLER, vol. iv. p. 124. In this work will be found much valuable and particular information on the subject which the author professes to deal with. Mr. Butler was an English Roman Catholic conveyancer, much respected, and zealous in the cause of his co-religionists.

throughout the discussion an earnest disposition to conform to any arrangements which might be proposed with a view to give confidence to the Protestants and which might not derogate from the principles of their own church. They acknowledged that a moderate provision from the State, such as had been extended to the Presbyterian clergy in Ireland, and to the Roman Catholic clergy in Scotland, would contribute much to the comfort and respectability of their clergy. Yet they always displayed an unaffected and disinterested reluctance to receive exclusive benefits which might have the appearance of separating their interests from those of the laity, and thereby impairing their means of discharging with effect their sacred functions.*

In return for this benefit which Mr. Pitt seemed disposed to confer upon them, the Catholic prelates agreed that the power known as the Veto† should be conceded to the Crown.

* Lord Castlereagh's speech on Mr. Grattan's motion "that the Roman Catholic petition be taken into consideration."—May 25, 1810.

† The "Veto" was thus defined in a resolution agreed upon by the four Roman Catholic archbishops and four Roman Catholic bishops, assembled in Dublin in 1799. "That so soon as the clergy shall have nominated one of their number to fill a vacant see in the manner usually adopted in their church, the candidate so selected shall be presented by the president of the election to Government, which, within one month after such presentation, shall transmit his name (if no objection be made against him) for appointment to the Holy See, or return the said name to the President of the Election for such transmission. But if Government shall have any proper objection against such candidate, the president of the election shall be

It has been sometimes said that the offer of confiding the Veto to the Crown was originally extorted from the bishops by necessity and terror. Lord Castlereagh, however, speaking of this assertion in 1810, said :—

A statement so ridiculous on the face of it, and so utterly destitute of truth, never could have been countenanced by any of the respectable individuals who signed those resolutions. The fact is, that I never perceived the slightest repugnance on their part to the measure, or a doubt of its being consistent with the principles of their religion to give to the Crown a negative upon the appointment of the bishops. As little did they doubt of the arrangement being acceptable to the Pope, whose consent they undertook to use their endeavours as far as possible to procure.—*Dr. Milner's Elucidation of the Veto printed in* 1808.

Mr. Pitt had meant to bring forward the Catholic claims as early after the first meeting

informed thereof within one month after presentation, who in that case will convene the electors to the election of another candidate." The hierarchy undertook to use their influence with the Pope to obtain his sanction to this arrangement, and it was added that the parish priests should take the oath of allegiance. [*Historical Memoirs of the Catholics*, vol. iv. pp. 118-119.] Whatever may have been the construction put upon the treaty just described by Mr. Pitt, there can be no doubt that the Roman Catholics believed that they had entered into a bargain in which Catholic emancipation was to balance connivance at the measure of the Union, and the right of veto was to be vested in the Crown in return for a stipend for the Catholic clergy. When after Mr. Pitt had (as they thought) failed to fulfil his part of the agreement, and after eight years, the question of relief was formally debated in Parliament, the stipend was not offered, some think it would not then have been accepted, and the Veto would no longer have been conceded.

of the United Parliament as possible. But no sooner had he intimated this intention than the King exhibited the most violent opposition to it. How George III. went mad for several days in consequence of the agitation of the question in the Cabinet—how Pitt resigned the premiership into the hands of his *locum tenens* Addington for three years, and then resumed it—are matters of common history. Much has been said and written in defence of Mr. Pitt's conduct on this occasion. It is probably true that he honestly meant to carry the measure of Catholic Relief, until he found that he could not do so consistently with his continuing to enjoy the favour of the King.* It must also be remembered that his own Cabinet would not have given him an unanimous support on the question, and that even if there had been no lion in his path in the person of the King, the No-popery party in England (though its strength was then but half developed) would have certainly offered a desperate resistance. Above all, it is necessary to bear in mind, when

* I believe it was Pitt's original intention to carry Catholic Emancipation as a portion of the Act of Union. Mr. Elliott, writing to Lord Castlereagh in Nov. 1798, says,—"I cannot be easily persuaded that, if more firmness had been displayed here at first, a Union might not have been accomplished, including the admission of the Catholic claims; but Mr. Pitt has with a lamentable facility yielded this point to *prejudice*, without I suspect acquiring a support in any degree equivalent to the sacrifice." *Castlereagh's Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 29.

estimating his conduct on this occasion, Pitt's expressed opinions as to the deference due to the feelings of the King, and of the King's Irish Roman Catholic subjects respectively, and that he always publicly asserted that the concession of the Catholic claims was to be considered merely as a measure of political expediency, and by no means as one of right or justice.*

But when all these allowances have been made in mitigation of historical censure, it cannot be denied that Pitt threw away a splendid opportunity of conferring an inestimable boon upon a large number of his fellow-subjects, and by his want of firmness in that critical moment, inflicted an injury upon the empire, the evil consequences of which to this day are felt in the relations between England and Ireland. Had Mr. Pitt resolutely declined to be the Prime Minister of George III., except upon the terms of his being permitted to support a measure of Catholic Relief, there can be no reasonable doubt but that either the permission would have been accorded, or that

* A deputation from the Roman Catholics of Ireland waited upon Mr. Pitt in 1805, headed by Lord Fingall, for the purpose of placing their petition to Parliament in his hands. After several interviews he declined to undertake the charge, telling them that the relief they sought was to be considered as a measure not of right or justice, but of expediency, and that into the question of expediency entered those of time and opportunity. The petition was then entrusted to Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox.—*Life of O'Connell, by William Fagan, M.P.*, vol. i. pp. 25-26.

Pitt could have carried the measure, though himself in opposition, in such a way that it would have been impossible for the King to withhold his ultimate sanction. The public feeling of England was not then so bitterly opposed to the Catholic cause but that it might have been over-persuaded or overcome by Pitt's enormous influence. In Ireland any instalment of emancipation would have been received in the most grateful and conciliatory spirit by the Roman Catholics, and the extreme Protestant party would have had no power to resist it if introduced as an imperial measure. The Irish people would have entered upon the relations of increased intimacy with their English brethren with feelings of confidence and good-will; the factious demagogue and the priestly agitator would have had no substantial grievance to work upon. It would then have been no longer necessary to rule Ireland by holding the two great creeds in a state of countercheck and hostility, or by using the one to repress the energies of the other, and the first thirty years of this century might have passed, in Ireland, in comparative prosperity and peace, instead of being a term of ceaseless agitation and suffering. After this opportunity of constitutionally carrying the measure had once been lost, it soon became almost an impossibility; so long as Pitt lived, any attempt

to bring it forward must have proved worse than useless; and when he died the question was found to present many additional difficulties, and soon entered upon a wholly different phase. The King was more desperately attached to his prejudice, and was backed more resolutely by the political and religious leaders of the ultra-Protestant party in England and in Ireland. The powerful "No-popery" feeling of England was rapidly called out and organized for battle, and in Ireland a fierce and immoderate agitation was carried on by the Roman Catholics, which long supplied their enemies with the only weapon they had before wanted—an argument. Distrust of the Irish Papist was stamped more deeply into the minds of Englishmen, and hatred of the English Protestant was inflamed to the utmost in the hearts of the Irish Roman Catholics. The priest became the recognized champion of his oppressed congregation, and used the power he thus obtained unscrupulously. The rancour of sectarian animosity was introduced into the deliberations of Parliament; and Irish grievances became the subject of an odious political traffic. A generation of men passed away from Ireland, their wrongs unredressed, and left to their sons a legacy of hatred and agitation: at last emancipation, that ought to have been granted as a great

measure of justice, and in a spirit of kindly feeling, was wrested from the Government in an hour of wild excitement and ill-blood, by an exertion of popular violence wholly unconstitutional.

Such were the results that ultimately followed from the conduct of the English Minister on this occasion: its immediate consequence was a feeling of deep distrust amongst the Irish Catholics. They were at once, placed in that attitude of hostility, in which they remained through all their subsequent negociations on the subject. They believed that Mr. Pitt had pledged himself to do his utmost in their behalf so soon as the two Parliaments should be united, but found him, two months after that Parliament was opened, pledged never again to mention to his royal master the rights or the wrongs of five millions of his subjects.

After Pitt's abandonment of their cause it was felt by many friends of the Catholics in Parliament that to bring it forward again as an opposition measure, would only have the effect of alienating many powerful interests in England, and exasperating the King, without, at the same time, a chance of carrying it. Lord Hutchinson,*

* Through the kindness of the late Earl of Donoughmore, I have had access to the interesting political correspondence of the leading members of the Hutchinson family.—ED.

writing to his brother, the Earl of Donoughmore, in January, 1805, says,—

What are the Catholics about? In the name of God, why are they not satisfied with the numerous avowed enemies which they have in Ireland? Do they wish to rouse future ones in this country, where there exists a prodigious prejudice against them? How will they forward their measure hereafter by committing a great number of persons against them now? The King, the Church, the old women, and the mob, are powerful enemies in England. We have been as much abused, calumniated, and beaten as any party which ever existed in any age or any country. A stop ought undoubtedly to be put to it. Recollect, I tell you that much mischief may arise from the discussion of the question. Our friends must wait until the next reign; they have no chance in this. I shall do everything in my power to prevent its being brought forward. As far as I am *personally* concerned, I must be indifferent, as I am pledged over and over again; but I am anxious for the sake of the Catholics themselves, to whose best interests the agitation of the question at the present moment would be highly injurious. I am sure Lord Kenmare and the English noblemen and gentlemen of his persuasion agree with me in sentiment.

This sound advice on the part of their friends in England was unheeded by the majority of the Roman Catholic leaders in Ireland, and at a meeting held in Dublin in February, 1805, O'Connell succeeded, despite the resistance of the Catholic aristocracy, in carrying a resolution

that a petition for redress of their grievances should be presented to Parliament: such a petition was accordingly prepared. It was couched in the most humble and loyal language, and was entrusted to a deputation of gentlemen, with a view to its being placed in the hands of Mr. Pitt for presentation to Parliament; this office he declined, and the petition was then entrusted to Mr. Fox and Lord Grenville. The petition was presented to the House of Commons on the 25th of March, and the Catholic question came under the discussion of the United Parliament for the first time on the 13th of May, 1805.

On this remarkable occasion Mr. Grattan, who had been returned for Malton in the preceding April, made his first speech in the English House of Commons, and fully realized the expectations which his previous fame as an orator had raised. Mr. Fox introduced the subject, concluding a long and able speech by moving "that the [redacted]n Catholic petition should be referred to a Committee of the whole House." He was replied to by Dr. Duigenan in a speech full of venom and fury against the Catholics. He quoted obsolete decrees of Rome, and acts of bygone councils, asserted that Papists were unchangeably hostile to the connexion of Ireland with Great Britain, and insisted that the satisfaction

of their claims would involve a violation of his Majesty's coronation oath. Grattan could not have had a better foil: he answered this bigot in an oration full of noble enthusiasm and sound political philosophy. When the venerable patriot began to speak, his audience marked with surprise the quaint intonations of his voice, and his strange uncouth action; but before he had uttered many sentences their attention was fascinated, and the House rang with applause at the conclusion of the following spirited reply to Dr. Duigenan. I cannot resist the temptation of quoting a few passages from this splendid specimen of Irish eloquence. Mr. Grattan said:—

I rise, Sir, to avoid the example of the member who has just sat down, and instead of calumniating either party, will defend both. The past troubles of Ireland, the rebellion of 1641, and the wars which followed, I do not wholly forget, but I only remember them to deprecate the example and renounce the animosity. The penal code which went before and followed those times, I remember also, but only enough to know, that the causes and reasons for that code have totally expired; and as on one side the Protestant should relinquish his animosity on account of the rebellions, so should the Catholics relinguish their animosity on account of the laws. The question is not stated by the member; it is not whether you will keep in a state of disqualification a few Irish Catholics, but whether you will keep in a state of languor and neutrality a fifth of the empire. Before you impose such a sentence on yourself, you will require better arguments than those

which the member has advanced. His speech consists of four parts:—1st, an invective uttered against the religion of the Catholics; 2nd, an invective uttered against the present generation; 3rd, an invective against the past; and 4th, an invective against the future: here the limits of creation interposed, and stopped the member.

It is to defend those different generations, and their religion, I rise; to rescue the Catholics from his attack, and the Protestants from his defence. . . .

In the following famous passage he refers to the Act of Union:

What is it that constitutes the strength and health of England but this sort of vitality, that her privileges, like her money, circulate everywhere, and centre nowhere. This it was which equality should have given, but did not give to France; this it was which the plain sense of your ancestors, without equality, did give the English; a something, which limited her kings, drove her enemies, and made a handful of men fill the world with their name. Will you, in your union with Ireland, withhold the regimen which has made you strong, and continue the regimen which has made her feeble? You will further recollect that you have invited her to your patrimony, and hitherto you have given her taxes, and an additional debt; I believe it is an addition of twenty-six millions: the other part of your patrimony, I should be glad to see it. Talk plainly and honestly to the Irish: "It is true your taxes are increased and your debts multiplied; but here are our privileges, great burthens and great privileges; this is the patrimony of England, and with this does she assess, recruit, inspire, consolidate."

But the Protestant ascendancy, it is said, alone can keep the country; namely, the gentry, clergy, and

nobility against the French, and without the people: it may be so; but in 1641, above ten thousand troops were sent from England to assist that party; in 1689, twenty-three regiments were raised in England to assist that party; in 1798, the English militia were sent over to assist that party: what can be done by spirit will be done by them; but would the City of London, on such assurances, risk a guinea? The Parliament of Ireland did risk everything, and are now nothing, and in their extinction left this instruction—not to their posterity, for they have none, but to you, who come in the place of their posterity—not to depend on a sect of religion, nor trust the final issue of your fortunes to anything less than the whole of your people.

The Parliament of Ireland—of that assembly I have a parental recollection. I sate by her cradle, I followed her hearse. In fourteen years she acquired for Ireland what you did not acquire for England in a century—freedom of trade, independency of the legislature, independency of the judges, restoration of the final judicature, repeal of a perpetual Mutiny Bill, Habeas Corpus Act, Nullum Tempus Act—a great work! You will exceed it, and I shall rejoice. I call my countrymen to witness, if in that business I compromised the claims of my country, or temporized with the power of England; but there was one thing which baffled the effort of the patriot, and defeated the wisdom of the senate; it was the folly of the theologian. When the Parliament of Ireland rejected the Catholic petition, and assented to the calumnies then uttered against the Catholic body, on that day she voted the union: if you should adopt a similar conduct, on that day you will vote the separation: many good and pious reasons you may give; many good and pious reasons she gave, and she lies *there* with her

many good and her pious reasons. That the Parliament of Ireland should have entertained prejudices, I am not astonished; but that you, that you who have, as individuals and as conquerors, visited a great part of the world, and have seen men in all their modifications, and Providence in all her ways; that you, now at this time of day, should throw up dykes against the Pope, and barriers against the Catholic, instead of uniting with that Catholic to throw up barriers against the French—this surprises—

Mr. Fox's motion was lost by a majority of 212.

On Mr. Pitt's death, in 1806, the friends of the Catholic cause in Parliament roused themselves from apathy, and several members of the Cabinet declared themselves favourable to some measure of relief: it was, however, necessary to proceed very cautiously, and, in order to feel the way, a measure was framed by Lords Grenville and Howick, which was limited in its scope, and was at the time calculated to catch the support of Protestant dissenters. The professed object of this measure was to throw open the higher grades of the army to all classes of Protestant dissenters, as well as to the Roman Catholics. Their bill was introduced on the 6th of March, 1807, and read a first time, but on Mr. Perceval's manifesting a determination to oppose it, it was allowed to drop. The King had, in fact, demanded from his new Ministers the same promise that he had obtained from Mr. Pitt. This they refused to give, and

consequently resigned. Lord Liverpool went to the country with a "No-popery" cry, and returned with a triumphant majority. From that day forward, for fifteen years, Catholic Emancipation became an Opposition question, and in spite of the desperate hostility of its enemies, steadily gained ground, not only in the House, but also in the country. A Protestant excitement almost as violent as that which had distracted the kingdom in 1700, attended the general election that took place in 1807; but this was to a great extent the result of the efforts of Government to secure a powerful majority; it soon subsided, and was followed by a comparative lull.

George Ponsonby (then leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons,) wrote in 1807 to Plunket: "'No Popery' is dead, and I am sure that if the King were out of the question the Catholic Bill would pass like a turnpike one." From 1807 until 1813 the Catholic claims were from time to time brought before the notice of Parliament, and the friends of a measure of relief in both Houses, and amongst the more enlightened classes of the English people, increased both in numbers and influence.*

* In the House of Commons:—

May 25, 1808.	For the Bill	128
	Against	281
		153

[In

In 1811, a circumstance occurred which gave strength and great apparent justice to the counsels of the more violent advisers of the Catholics. Those who had hitherto urged that body to show moderation, had done so expressly on the grounds that, though it were vain to hope for concessions from George III., yet that the Prince of Wales was bound by all the ties of friendship, as well as of politics, to the Liberal party, and more particularly to that portion of it which favoured Catholic Emancipation. They were therefore exhorted to be patient, and assured that every loyal sacrifice of their own pressing interests, and every proof of confidence in the benevolence of the Heir Apparent, would be fully rewarded so soon as the latter should find himself at liberty to act in accordance with his own inclinations. But, in 1811, the King's

In the House of Commons :—			
May 18, 1810.	For the Bill	109	
	Against	213	
			104
May 23, 1812.	For the Bill	215	
	Against	300	
			85
In the House of Lords :—			
May 27, 1808.	Contents	74	
	Non-contents	161	
			87
April 21, 1812.	Contents	102	
	Non-contents	174	
			72

indisposition had become so serious that it was no longer possible to carry on Government, even ostensibly, in his person. The Prince of Wales was appointed Regent, though his power was for a time to be limited by certain restrictions. The leaders of the Liberal party were in hourly expectation of being called upon to fill the various offices of State which they had already parcelled out among themselves. The spirits of the Roman Catholics rose;—but when the Whig leaders were summoned to Carlton House they were told that Mr. Perceval and his friends were to continue in office. Mr. Perceval was considered the Ministerial embodiment of an anti-Catholic policy. The following extract from a letter of Lord Hutchinson, who was at the time in personal attendance on the Prince, exhibits at least the ostensible reasons of this unexpected conduct:—

Feb. 4th, 1811.—The Prince has come to a determination not to remove the present Ministers, and, of course, things all remain *in statu quo*. This decision, which has come upon all parties and upon the public most unexpectedy, has been the result entirely of his own mind, which was greatly agitated by the feeling that the circumstance of the introduction of new Ministers might have an unfavourable effect on the King's recovery, and perhaps cause a relapse, in which event the Prince felt that he could not forgive himself. The impression was so strongly made upon him that he was not to be moved, though all his Royal Highness's best

and most confidential friends pressed most forcibly and repeatedly the necessity of an opposite conduct upon him, for the support of the firmness and consistency of his own character, for the sake of the public, and in justice to the political party who had fought so hard a battle for him. Thus the matter stands at the present moment, much as it must excite the wonder of every thinking man. Whether, supposing it likely the King may be showable again in a very few months, the party have not had a good escape from all the responsibility to which they would have been subjected from such a momentary possession of power, is a question very well deserving of consideration; but though the Prince makes the present men his Ministers, they have not obtained on that account a bit more of the confidence of the Opposition.

As to the *Catholics*, I have been in correspondence with Hay* for the purpose of preventing their addressing the Prince, or, if they did address him, mentioning anything of the Catholic question. Hay wrote to me to say that the address ought to be presented, but that they would say nothing about themselves. I trust and hope that they will keep down their feelings on the subject of the step which the Prince has taken, however grating it must be to them.

The Prince, however, though giving his confidence in England to Mr. Perceval, still encouraged the hopes of the Roman Catholics for some purpose of his own. Lord Moira is the person alluded to in the last sentence of the following extract from a letter written by Lord Hutchinson:

* Secretary to the Catholic Committee in Dublin.

Feb. 24th, 1811.—My object is to put the Catholics on their guard against the delusions which it appears to be the object of the Prince to practise on them by giving them reason to suppose that, though Perceval is his chosen Minister, the Catholic question is to be conceded. However unintelligible for you this, such is the idea that the Prince's runners are running about the streets to propagate—I trust with very bad effect for themselves.

Perhaps his Royal Highness may wish to smooth the way for a conspicuous friend of his, and whom I highly value and esteem, taking upon himself the government of Ireland—at all events, the object is to humbug the Catholics—of this there can be no doubt.

Lord Moira's appointment as Lord-Lieutenant was not carried into effect, but the Prince still held out hopes to his former friends that if, at the expiration of the "restrictions," the King should still be unable to resume his functions, and there should seem no likelihood of his being in a condition to do so, they might be taken into confidence. The appointed year elapsed, the restrictions on the Regency were removed, the King was still hopelessly ill, but the only advances made by the Prince to his early friends were those already explained in this chapter, and which were of course rejected with indignation. The Irish Roman Catholics on their part felt that a new life had been added to their oppressors' lease of power. They sat down in despair of any improvement in their condition

coming from "the highest quarter." The power of O'Connell was doubled, and his followers easily fell into unconstitutional ways and gross violations of decency, which acted most unfavourably for their interests upon English opinion.

Lord Grenville seems, even before the termination of the cabals which ended in his exclusion from office, to have clearly foreseen the disastrous future of the Catholic question. He wrote to the Duke of Buckingham on the 6th of January, 1812.

I suspect the pretence about the Catholics is to be that it will be *indelicate* to do anything for them so long as the King lives, that is very possibly, and not improbably, for fifteen or twenty years more. Will the rest of the world stand still for him? and will Ireland be as easy to manage then as it would even now, when it is about ten times more difficult than it was ten or twelve years ago.*

It was, in fact, daily becoming more evident to those who read the signs of the time aright, that every hour this measure of justice was delayed, the danger that it might avert became more imminent, and at the same time the terms which might be made with the Catholics, and the spirit

* *Court of the Regency*, vol. i. p. 179.—An extremely interesting and particular account of the political intrigues connected with this Cabinet crisis, is to be found in the volume just quoted. The whole transaction seems to me to reflect much credit on Lord Wellesley, and even more on Lord Grenville, while I cannot think that Lord Moira (the Prince's go-between on these occasions) stood as uncompromisingly by his Irish friends as, from his past conduct, they had reason to hope he would.

in which it would be received by them, when it should be granted, must be more unfavourable to Protestant interests.*

* The growth of popular opinion in Ireland on the subject of Catholic Emancipation, between the year 1807 (when their friends were driven from the Cabinet for venturing to moot their claims) up to 1813, may be thus shortly chronicled :—In 1807, the Habeas Corpus Act, which had been for several years suspended in Ireland, was restored, and the Catholics having thus regained their civil rights of assembling, held an aggregate meeting. At it, though the most respectable members present, including, of course, the nobility, were in favour of giving further proof of their loyalty by patience and submission, an active faction was found ready to support O'Connell in a course of agitation. In September, 1808, the *veto* (which Grenville and Grattan had in the preceding May been authorized to offer on behalf of the Catholics) was declared "*inexpedient*" by the prelates assembled in Dublin, and Dr. Milner, their agent, at that time in London, who had previously argued strongly in its favour, immediately changed his tone, and declared that the measure of which it formed a part "was a most infamous Bill, the like of which was never devised by Cecil, or Shaftesbury, or Robespierre." In 1809, a committee of delegates from the several counties of Ireland was formed, to prepare a petition to Parliament : in 1810, in order to avoid the penalties of the Old Convocation Act (aimed by Lord Clare, in 1793, against all assemblies of delegates, collected under pretence of petitioning), it assembled not as a "committee of delegates," but in an "aggregate meeting of Catholics," at which it was resolved that a committee should be appointed to manage, not the "Catholic petition," but "Catholic affairs." On this occasion Lord Ffrench, one of the Catholic aristocracy, told the meeting, "Your commission is at an end ; you have exceeded your powers. Do you mean to create yourselves into a perpetual Parliament?" In the same year a new element was added to the political complications by the public agitation of the Repeal of the Union at a meeting of the Dublin Corporation. On this occasion O'Connell said, "Were Mr. Perceval to offer me to-morrow the Repeal of the Union, upon the terms of re-enacting the penal code, I declare from my heart, and in the presence of my God, that I would cheerfully embrace the offer." (This was evidently a purely oratorical alternative.) About this time Mr. John Keogh, the venerable leader of the Catholics, was finally deposed in favour of O'Connell, and the policy of moderation, advocated by the former, was shelved, while the words of O'Connell—"Agitate, agitate, agitate"—were kept ringing in the ears of the people. In 1811, Lord Fingall and Dr. Sheridan were arrested and tried under the provisions of the Convention Act, and when Dr. Sheridan had been acquitted, mainly owing to O'Connell's able defence of him, counter legal proceedings were taken against Chief Justice Downes, for his

At this stage had the Catholic question arrived in 1813, within and without the walls of Parliament, when Plunket made his great speech. In order to estimate that effort duly, it is necessary to bear in mind the temper of the House to which it was addressed, and in which his old antagonist Castlereagh said "it would never be forgotten."

Of the generation of Englishmen who believed, and believed honestly, that the refusal of emancipation to Roman Catholics was just and expedient, scarcely a representative remains. Doubtless, the bright hopes cherished of advantages to be derived from that measure of relief have not been fulfilled, and the Catholics, so far as they have caused this disappointment, have been bitterly reproached by many of their warmest friends. But no one could

having signed the warrant on which Dr. Sheridan had been arrested. These, of course, failed. In May, 1812, the assassination of Mr. Perceval, who was considered a Ministerial incarnation of religious exclusivism, seemed to give the Roman Catholics a fresh hope of some legislative redress of their grievances. The Catholic Committee (having changed their name to that of the Catholic Board, in order to avoid further prosecutions, under the Convention Act), proceeded to prepare and forward petitions to Parliament. But the popular agitation in Dublin and throughout Ireland went on; O'Connell's power increased, and he every day gave a more unlimited licence to his tongue. Those on the spot who watched the tide of public feeling observed that its current was setting in the direction of an angry sea, in which the voice of the statesman must be lost in the tumult of popular excitement, and foresaw that emancipation would at last be forced through Parliament by the will of five millions of Catholic people, rather than begged as a favour from its sentiment or liberality. Meanwhile British senators, deliberating calmly in the seclusion of Westminster, paid little heed to the ravings of Irish discontent, or, if they listened for a moment, it was only to turn away disgusted at its violence and indecency, and confirmed in their prejudices.

now be found to deny that emancipation was, fifty years ago, a measure which it was unjust to refuse and dangerous to delay. Very different was the state of English public opinion in 1813, when Plunket delivered his first great speech on this subject.

Nearly all the most distinguished men on both sides of the House were in favour of the principle of Catholic Emancipation. Burke, Fox, Pitt, Canning, Sheridan, Wilberforce, Romilly, Windham, and Tierney were, or had been, amongst its advocates. But there was a large class of members who honestly believed that the laws which excluded the Roman Catholic from Parliament were inseparably identified with all the civil and religious liberty which had been vindicated for the Protestant in 1688; and though the struggle lay principally between the intellect of the House and its more stolid members, yet there were found a few men of ability and eminence, such as Perceval, Peel, and Abbot, who consented to be the leaders of the majority in opposition to the movement. Outside the walls of Parliament, too, there was a vast amount of dogged prejudice amongst the well-meaning but impracticable middle classes, which was easily worked up into a condition of blind fanaticism, whenever it suited the purpose of any political party to raise a cry

that a violence was about to be done to the coronation oath, or that the Church was in danger. With fond folly they linked the living religious institution to the dead political code, not perceiving that, every day this unnatural union was continued, the vital energies of the one were palsied by the infectious corruption of the other, and that the unjust system of laws that they claimed as the ally of the Church was, in fact, its most deadly foe. In 1813, though more liberal opinions had made some way in Parliament, throughout the people generally this prejudice existed in its simplest form; and if such an experiment as the Clare election of 1829 had been then attempted, it would have been treated as rank rebellion, and its originators would have been punished with uncompromising severity; it was necessary that for sixteen years more all the arguments should be before the country, and should be driven home by the eloquence and reasoning of which the speech below affords an example.

The fact is, the popular mind had not shaken off the impression of anger and terror which the many plots against the public peace, supposed to have been sanctioned by the Romish Church—certainly undertaken by members of it—had naturally left upon it. It had grown so obdurate and stiff in the attitude in which it had been

placed by history, that none but men of extraordinary courage would have attempted to change it. It was still liable to the starts and alarms, which were traces and relics of the dangers through which the country had once actually passed. Seminary priests, acting as the spies of foreign powers, shrouded in mystery, and lurking about in disguise, were still remembered, and their interference was still believed possible. It was not acknowledged that dangers of this description had been left far behind, and that the Church of Rome having found the Protestant succession inexpugnable, had relaxed those efforts to alter it, which had ever been attended to herself with failure and odium.

But the ever-recurring plots, which at the end of Charles the Second's reign, and afterwards, had driven the nation into fierce indiscriminate executions, and kept it in an agony of terror and suspicion, had left as their result a violent "No-popery" feeling, which became an element in the national character and a constitutional habit. Suspicion of everything Popish had grown to be not only traditional, but absolutely hereditary in the character naturally transmitted from father to son, and hence the principle that the Roman Catholic should be excluded from political power had been placed on the footing of an axiom. No one inquired the

reason, no one asked why, or wished to be shown why not. People did not trouble their heads about the evidence of what was supposed to be self-evident, and long prescription was thought to be equivalent to demonstration.

But Plunket saw this question in a very different light. In his own unhappy country he had known religious distinctions as the sources of all the misery, vice, and weakness that made the Irish people a byword amongst nations; he had seen an insolent minority domineering over semi-barbarous masses of their fellow-countrymen. To religious hatred he attributed the horrors of '98, the humiliation of 1800, and still he saw growing into wealth and importance a power within the State, that, if not allowed to mingle with the other elements of national strength, must become a cause of national weakness. It required no prophetic foresight to know that every day the great measure of justice was delayed, ill-will and hatred were freshly sown amongst the people, seeds of the storm of which the whirlwind must sooner or later be reaped.

Plunket knew that before the measure of Catholic emancipation could be carried, much honest conviction and some dishonest prejudice had to be overcome; he therefore applied himself to calming the fears of the timid, clearing the

ideas and answering the arguments of the wrong-headed, and lashing with relentless severity the bigotry of those who obstinately shut their ears to reason.

The legal disabilities from which the Roman Catholics sought at that time to be relieved may be shortly stated as follows :—By the Corporation Act (13th Charles II.) they were excluded from offices in cities and corporations : by the Test Act (25th Charles II.) they were excluded from all civil and military offices, except in those cases in which the Acts of 1793 had removed those restrictions : by the 30th Charles II. they were excluded from either House of Parliament ; and in England, though not in Ireland, by an Act of William and Mary they were deprived of any elective franchise which they otherwise might have enjoyed. Under the Mutiny and Admiralty laws, Roman Catholic soldiers and sailors might be compelled to attend Protestant worship. Besides these statutes so practically disadvantageous, there were many others insulting and injurious to the Roman Catholics which had been allowed to become obsolete. The machinery by which these acts of exclusion were carried out in practice, was the tendering to the candidate for office the oath of supremacy, which asserts the King's civil and ecclesiastical pre-eminence

within the realm; or the sacramental test of taking the Protestant communion; or a declaration which he was required to make, denying the doctrine of transubstantiation, and denouncing the invocation of saints, and the sacrifice of the mass as idolatrous. In Parliament, the oath and the declaration had both to be taken. It was also necessary, before a Roman Catholic could be admitted to office, that he should disclaim upon oath the temporal authority of the Pope outside his own States. I may now, without further preface, introduce Plunket's speech in the debate of the 25th February, 1813, upon Mr. Grattan's motion for a committee of the whole House to inquire into the laws affecting the Roman Catholics. Before Mr. Grattan began his speech, Mr. Yorke called upon the clerk to read the passages of the Bill of Rights which guarantee a Protestant constitution for Church and State. In reply to this innuendo, Grattan declared that these very clauses might most properly be introduced into the preamble of his proposed bill. His speech was able and earnest, but a construction was sought to be put upon some of its passages as if they had implied that Britain was, as regarded Ireland, a foreign country. Mr. Bankes, who immediately preceded Plunket in the debate, had found fault

with Mr. Grattan for these expressions. Mr. Plunket said :

Mr. Speaker, I am induced to rise, at so early a period of the debate, for the purpose of obviating the mis-statement (certainly unintentional) of the expressions and sentiments of my right honourable friend Mr. Grattan, which has been made by the honourable gentleman who has last spoken. My right honourable friend did not call Great Britain a foreign country; and even if such an expression had accidentally been used by him, the uniform tenor of his opinions and of his language in this house might have suggested to the honourable member the propriety of abstaining from a verbal criticism upon it. My right honourable friend unites to the enthusiasm of an Irish patriot the comprehensive views of a statesman and a legislator; and his affection for his native country, to which his life has been devoted, has expanded into love of the general weal, and zeal for the glory of the empire. In every sentiment which he has uttered I most cordially concur. My right honourable friend has not been so absurd as to propose to re-enact the Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement; but absurd and extravagant calumnies having, with no laudable industry, been propagated, as if the present motion were intended to invade the Church and to overturn the State, my right honourable friend has placed in the front of his resolution a denial of the calumny.

The honourable gentleman has said there is nothing specific or intelligible in the motion or in the statement. The motion appears to me to be perfectly distinct, and perfectly intelligible. It proposes to remove all the civil disabilities which affect a great portion of our fellow-subjects, on account of their religion; offering, at the

same time, to accompany the measure with every security which may be required for the protection of the Protestant interest.

Much has been said of the question of right. It appears to me to be a very unnecessary metaphysical discussion, and one which cannot have any practical application in the present instance. In the same sense in which religious toleration is a right, a due share of political power is a right. Both must yield to the paramount interests of society, if such interests require it. Neither can be justifiably withheld, unless their inconsistency with the public interest is clearly established. But in the present case the question does not, in any respect, arise; for we have already admitted the Roman Catholics to substantial power, and what we seek to exclude them from is honour. The privileges which are withheld are impotent as protections to the State, but most galling and provoking to the party who is excluded. No candid mind can hesitate to admit that these exclusions must be severely felt as subjects of grievance, and grievances of the most insulting kind. That the man of the first eminence at the bar should be prevented from acting as one of his Majesty's counsel, or from sitting on the bench of justice; that the gallant officer who has distinguished himself in the battles of his country, when his heart is beating high with the love of honourable fame, should be stopped in his career, and see his companions in arms raised above him, to lead his countrymen to victory and glory, must be felt as wounding and humiliating. In this house, does it require argument to show that exclusion from Parliament must be considered as a privation and indignity? What assembles us here? The honest ambition of serving our country—the pride of abiding by honourable engagements—or

motives, perhaps, of a less elevated description. Whatever they may be, honourable and dignified, or otherwise, they subsist in their minds as much as in ours; and though the elective franchise, which has been granted to the Irish Catholic, gives him a substantial representation, yet the exclusion is calculated to operate as a severe and humiliating disability; and the more humiliating, because it is a mark of inferiority branded on the Catholic, merely for the purpose of marking inferiority!

The topic that toleration admits of one consideration and political power of another has little application to this case, even if it were true; for here it must be contended that rank, and station, and honour are not the proper appendages of wealth, and knowledge, and education, and of everything which constitutes political and moral strength. In every system of human policy the few must govern the many, but, putting military force out of the case, their legitimate government must arise from their superiority in wealth and knowledge; if, therefore, you exclude the wealthy and the educated from the government of the State, you throw into the scale of the many the only weight which could have preserved the balance of the State itself. This is universally true; but when you reject the opulent and the educated, on account of a condition which they have in common with the many, you add the attraction of politics and party to the operation of general and moral causes; and, if the principle of exclusion be a religious one, you organize not merely the principles of revolution, but of revolution furious and interminable. Put the policy of the separation of political rank from property and education, in the extreme case of their total division, or in any intermediate degree, the conclusion is equally true, that the attempt so to separate, establishes a prin-

ciple, not of government, but of the dissolution of all government! So sensible of this truth were our ancestors, that when they saw, or thought they saw, a necessity for dishonouring the Roman Catholic, they adopted, as a necessary consequence, the policy of impoverishing and barbarizing him. When they degraded him, they felt that their only safety was to steep him in poverty and ignorance. Their policy, good or bad, was consistent—the means had a diabolical fitness for their end. Is it not a perfect corollary to this proposition, is it not the legitimate converse of this truth, that, if you re-admit them to wealth and to knowledge, you must restore them to ambition and to honour? What have we done? We have trod back their steps; we have rescued the Catholics from the code, which formed at once their servitude and our safety. And we fancy we can continue the exclusion, from civil station, which superinduced that code. Theirs was a necessity, real or fancied, but a consistent system; we pretend no necessity; we have voluntarily abdicated the means of safety, and we wilfully and uselessly continue the causes of danger. The time to have paused was before we heaved from those sons of earth, the mountains which the wisdom or the terrors of our ancestors had heaped upon them; but we have raised them up and placed them erect—are we prepared to hurl them down and bury them again?

Where is the madman to propose it? Where is the idiot who imagines that they can remain as they are? The state of the Catholics of Ireland is, in this respect, unparalleled by anything in ancient or modern history. They are not slaves, as some of their absurd advocates call them, but freemen, possessing substantially the same political rights with their Protestant brethren, and with all the other subjects of the empire: that is, possessed of

all the advantages which can be derived from the best laws, administered in the best manner, of the most free and most highly civilized country in the world. Do you believe that such a body, possessed of such a station, can submit to contumely and exclusion? That they will stand behind your chair and wait upon you at the public banquet? The less valuable, in sordid computation, the privilege, the more marked the insult in refusing it, and the more honourable the anxiety for possessing it! Miserable and unworthy wretches would they be if they ceased to aspire to it; base and dangerous hypocrites if they dissembled their wishes; formidable instruments of domestic or foreign tyranny if they did not entertain them! The liberties of England would not, for half a century, remain proof against the contact and contagion of four millions of opulent and powerful subjects, who disregarded the honours of the State, and felt utterly uninterested in the constitution.

In coming forward, therefore, with this claim of honourable ambition, they at once afford you the best pledge of their sincerity, and the most satisfactory evidence of their title. They claim the benefit of the ancient vital principle of the constitution, that the honours of the State should be open to the talents and to the virtues of all its members. The adversaries of the measure invert the order of all civilized society. They have made the Catholics an aristocracy, and they would treat them as a mob; they give to the lowest of the rabble, if he is a Protestant, what they refuse to the head of the peerage, if he is a Catholic. They shut out my Lord Fingall from the State, and they make his footman a member of it; and this strange confusion of all social order, they dignify with the name of the British constitution; and the proposal to consider the best and

most conciliatory mode of correcting it, they cry down as a dangerous and presumptuous innovation.

Sir, the Catholics propose no innovation. They ask for an equal share, as fellow-subjects, in the constitution, as they find it; in that constitution, in whose original stamina they had an undisputed right, before there was a reformation and before there was a revolution, and before the existence of the abuses which induced the necessity of either. They desire to bear its burdens, to share its dangers, to participate its glory, and to abide its fate. They bring, as an offering, their hearts and hands, their lives and fortunes, but they desire also the privilege of bringing with them their consciences, their religion, and their honour, without which they would be worthless and dangerous associates.

The position, therefore, to be maintained, by those who say that the first principles of the constitution are in opposition to their claim, is rather a critical one. They must show why it is that a Roman Catholic may vote for a member to sit in Parliament, and yet may not himself be a member of it; why he may be the most powerful and wealthy subject in the realm, and the greatest landed proprietor, and yet may not fill the lowest office in the meanest town upon his estates; why he may be the first advocate at the bar, and be incapable of acting as one of the counsel of his Sovereign; why he may be elector, military officer, grand juror, corporator, magistrate, in Ireland, where the danger, if any, is immense, and why none of them in England, where the causes of apprehension are comparatively trifling and insignificant. Besides all this, arguing as they do, that the Roman Catholic religion necessarily includes hostility to the State, on the very points which, by the oaths which the Roman Catholics have taken, are solemnly disavowed,

they must show the safety of harbouring, in the bosom of the State, and admitting to its essential and substantial benefits, a body of men whose only title to admission has been perjury; a body of men who, in addition to religious opinions, inconsistent with our particular constitution, have violated the solemn obligations which bind man to man, and therefore are unworthy of being admitted into any society in which the sacred principles of social intercourse are respected.

Sir, if these things are so, the petitions of the public should be, not to be protected against the dangers which are to come, but to be rescued from those which have already been incurred. Nay, more, if oaths are no longer to be regarded, we should not rely on the vain securities which our ancestors have resorted to, and which consists of oaths, and only of oaths; but we should devise some new means of proving their religion by the testimony of others, and of chaining them down to it, without the possibility of disowning or escaping from it.

But, let us examine, somewhat more accurately, these supposed principles of public policy which oppose an insuperable bar to the admission of the Roman Catholic. They join issue with you on this point. So far as concession is inconsistent with the true principles of the constitution, the safety of the Established Church, and of the Protestant throne, they admit that they are entitled to nothing; so far as it is not inconsistent, they claim to be entitled to everything. Let it be shown that these great foundations of our liberties and of our civil and ecclesiastical polity are their enemies, and they must yield in silence. They must receive it as the doom of fate; it must be submitted to, as part of the mysterious system of Providence, which, whilst it has embarked us in an awful struggle for the preservation of its choicest

blessings, has ordained that, in this struggle, we may not unite the hearts and affections of our people. We must cherish the hope that the same incomprehensible wisdom, which at once impels us to this mighty contest and forbids us to use the means of success, may work out our safety by methods of its own. If it can be made to appear that the imperious interests of our country pronounce, from necessity, this heavy and immitigable sentence upon millions of its subjects, I trust that they will learn submission, and not embitter their hopeless exclusion by the miseries of discontent and of disorder; but, before they bow down to this eternal interdict, before they retire from the threshold of the constitution to the gloom of hopeless and never-ending exclusion, I appeal to every candid mind, are they not entitled to have it proved by arguments, clear as the light of heaven, that this necessity exists? I now challenge the investigation of those supposed maxims, step by step, and inch by inch. Let it be stated in some clear and intelligible form, what is this fundamental prop of the constitution; what is this overwhelming ruin, which is to tumble upon us by its removal. Let us meet and close with this argument. But beware, I warn you, of attempting to outlaw the Irish people, by an artificial and interested clamour! Let not those who have encouraged the Irish people to expect redress, now affect to be bound by this spell of their own raising! This would be to palter with their own consciences and the public safety, and can entail no consequences other than calamity and disgrace.

The only obstacles, which appear to stand in the way of the Roman Catholics, are the oath of supremacy and the declaration against transubstantiation. The former of these, in its original enactment and application, had a very limited political relation. I speak not of the capri-

cious fury of Henry VIII., which made it treason to refuse the oath. He considered himself, under God, the supreme head of the Church, in all things spiritual and temporal; and bound the subject to submit to all his ordinances made, and to be made, under the penalty of death. But the application of the oath, as it was modified by Elizabeth, had chiefly (and with the exception of offices immediately derived from the Crown, or concerning the administration of justice,) a religious, and not a political, application. Subject to these exceptions, it professed not to control the private opinion, nor to make it a ground of exclusion. But it subjected the public profession of non-conformity to penalty. And, accordingly, Roman Catholics were admissible to Parliament and to corporate offices for more than one hundred years after the introduction of the oath of supremacy. Then came the laws of Charles II., which, for the first time, superinduced the general exclusion from office, as a political consequence of the religious opinion.

Here, then, were before us, two principles, the first, that of the Reformation, which proscribed the religion; the second, that of Charles II., which presumed that certain unconstitutional tenets must be held by those who professed that religion, and therefore made civil incapacity the consequence of the religious belief. Here were two principles perfectly distinct, but perfectly consistent. Now what have we done? We have, in fact, abrogated the principles of the Reformation, for we have repealed the laws against recusancy, and legalized the religion. Having done this, it was a necessary consequence to say that we could not infer, from a religious tenet which we legalized, a political opinion inconsistent with the safety of the State; otherwise we should have been unjustifiable in legalizing it. We therefore substituted instead of the

renunciation of the religious doctrine, from which the political opinion had been formerly inferred, a direct denial, upon oath, of the political opinion itself. If then the Roman Catholic may lawfully exercise the religion, and if he will take the political oath, how can we consistently make objection, either in a religious or political point of view, to his being admitted to the remaining privileges of citizenship? If there is anything inconsistent with the true principles of our religion, in permitting the Catholic to enjoy civil offices, the authors of the Reformation were deeply criminal in permitting him to enjoy them, while they denounced his religion; and we have been doubly traitors, to our religion and to our constitution, in sanctioning by law the free exercise of that religion; throwing away the religious test and substituting a political one in the place of it. If the political oath, either from its supposed insincerity, or from any other cause, is an insufficient substitute for the religious abjuration, how can we be justifiable in allowing it to give the Catholic admission to the high constitutional privileges which he now enjoys? If it is a sufficient substitute, we prevaricate with our own consciences, in refusing him admission, on the strength of it, to the remaining privileges which he requires. In direct violation of the policy which substituted the political oath for the religious declaration, we now say that we require this declaration that he does not hold the religious doctrine which implies the political. But he is ready to swear that he does hold the political doctrine, and still you prefer his declaration that he does not hold the opinion, which furnishes the presumption, to his oath that he does not hold the opinion, which is the thing presumed. Is not this a perfect proof that the political apprehension is a pretext, and that it is bigotry, or something worse,

which is the motive? Is not this also a full attestation of your perfect reliance on the honour and sincerity of the Catholic, as well as of your own intolerance? You will accept his word as a proof that he has abjured his religious tenets, but you will not receive his oath as long as he abides by them. Is it that he is insincere in his oath? Then why trust his declaration? Has the oath a negative power? It is not merely that his oath is not binding, but that which shall be full evidence, if he merely asserts it by implication, shall become utterly incredible if he swears to it directly. Why, this is worse than transubstantiation; it is as gross a rebellion against the evidence of demonstration as the other is against the testimony of sense. Again, the oath of supremacy extends to a renunciation, as well of the spiritual as of the temporal authority of the Pope; and its object appears to have been twofold; first, to exclude the interference of the Pope in the temporal concerns of the realm; and secondly, to secure the Protestant hierarchy against the claims of the sect which had been evicted. As to the first, the Roman Catholic tenders an oath, utterly denying the Pope's right to exercise any kind of temporal jurisdiction in these kingdoms; as to the second, he tenders an oath, abjuring all interference with the Protestant establishment and hierarchy. What then remains in difference? The right of the Pope with respect to their clergy. Now, to this the oath of supremacy never had any reference, nor could have had: their clergy were not recognised as having any legal existence when the oath of supremacy was enacted, nor as the subject of any other regulation than that of heavy punishment if they were discovered. This part of the oath merely looks to the preservation of the Protestant hierarchy, and all this is effectually provided for by the oath which is proffered.

If the Catholic swears that he will not disturb or question the Establishment, it would seem to concern us very little whether he admires or approves it, or what may be his abstract opinion of its fitness. We have already the effect of the oath of supremacy, so far as it concerns practical and conscientious submission, now and at all times; and it is perfectly childish to say that we will not accept their present acquiescence, and their oath that they will continue to acquiesce, unless they also swear that they ought, as matter of abstract right, to do so; that is, they must not only submit to our title, but swear to our argument. I do not mean to say that the mode of appointing their clergy and the Pope's interference with respect to it, is not a very important topic, and one which we are well warranted in looking to and regulating; but what I rely on is, that it is a new subject, resting on its own merits, and calling for and requiring a conciliatory adjustment, but in no respect involving anything which affects the oath of supremacy or the principles of the Reformation.

As to the Corporation Act, every person acquainted with its history knows that it was introduced, not with respect to the Roman Catholics, but to sectaries of a very different description, who had got into the corporations during the government of Cromwell, and were supposed to be disaffected to the politics of the court. Part of the oath, as it was originally framed, was, that it was unlawful, under any pretence, to take up arms against the King, or those commissioned by him; and the amendment, which sought to qualify it by adding the word "lawfully," before commissioned, was thrown out. One of the first acts of William and Mary was to repeal this scandalous and slavish enactment, which was at direct variance with the first principles of the

Revolution; and yet we are told, in patriotic petitions, from loyal Protestant bodies, that this Corporation Act is one of the great bulwarks of the Revolution. This mutilated fragment, one half which was lopped off by the Revolution, is one of its pillars, and the Test Act is the other. Its history is known to everybody. It was the child of my Lord Shaftesbury, who, on the score of religion, possessed a most philosophical composure, but had a very pious horror of the Court, and levelled this Act personally against the Duke of York;* and, as the Corporation Act was the first offering of overflowing servility, brought in on the full tide of the Restoration, so was the Test Act the result of deep and bitter repentance, subsiding at its ebb; and yet these conflicting, partial, and temporary regulations are dwelt on, as if they formed part of that great event which we all consider as the foundation of our liberties. But I beg to ask has the charter of our liberties become obsolete? If not, why are those mighty instruments hung up like rusty armour? Does not every man know that they are endured only because they are not exercised, and that they are never mentioned by any constitutional writer without pleading their inactivity as the only apology for their existence? The taste and sense of the public is, in this respect, a reproach to the tardy liberality of the legislature.

Sir, a right honourable gentleman (Mr. Yorke), to

* The Act passed the House of Commons without much opposition; "but in the Upper House," says Hume, "the Duke of York moved that an exception might be admitted in his favour. With great earnestness, and even with tears in his eyes, he told them that he was now to cast himself on their kindness in the greatest concern which he could have in the world, and he protested that whatever his religion might be it should only be between God and his own soul. Notwithstanding this strong effort in so important a point, he prevailed only by two voices."

whom I wish to allude with every possible degree of public and private respect, has desired that the Bill of Rights should be referred to; give me leave to ask, do you find in the Bill of Rights the principle of exclusion of Roman Catholics from the Legislature or from the State? It is required, no doubt, by the Bill of Rights, that the new Oath of Supremacy, thereby substituted for the former one, should be taken by all who were bound to take the former one, but this is not introduced as one of the grievances redressed or rights declared, but is merely incidentally mentioned, in consequence of the substitution of the one oath for the other; and the declaration against Popery is in no respect adverted to; but one fact, most decisive and important on this point, is this, that when this act was passed the Roman Catholics of Ireland were not, by any law or usage, excluded from Parliament or from civil or military offices. The articles of Limerick (3rd October, 1691) stipulated 'for all such privileges in the exercise of religion as were enjoyed in the reign of Charles II., and as were consistent with the laws of Ireland. They required the oath of allegiance, as created in the first year of William and Mary; and the oath to be administered to the Roman Catholics, submitting to his Majesty's Government, was to be that oath and no other; and it was further stipulated that, so soon as their affairs would permit them to summon a Parliament, their Majesties would endeavour to procure them such further securities as might preserve them from any disturbance on account of their religion. At this time Roman Catholics were not excluded from Parliament in Ireland, nor were there any test or corporation laws in force against them. On the faith of these articles, all of which were punctually performed on their part,

they surrendered the town, and left King William at liberty to apply his arms to the great cause in which he was sustaining the liberties of Europe. The stipulation, on the part of Government, was to protect them against any additional oaths, and to endeavour to procure for them additional securities. What was done? The Act of the 3rd of William and Mary was passed, giving them no additional securities, but excluding them, for the first time, from Parliament and from offices civil and military, and from the Bar, unless they subscribed the declaration against Popery, and swore the oath of supremacy. The stipulation in the articles had been not for those in garrison, but that the Roman Catholics of Ireland should enjoy their privileges? for the garrison they had stipulated for liberty to serve abroad, and to be conveyed accordingly. These victims of mistaken loyalty, when they were about to leave their native land, and, with the characteristic generosity and improvidence of their country, to commit themselves with the fortunes of a banished monarch, stipulated, not for themselves, but for the country they were about to leave for ever; and the Parliament, by a cruel mockery, enacted, not for the country, but for them, that they should not lose the privileges of—what? Of being barristers-at-law, clerks in Chancery, attorneys, practitioners of law and physics, but that they might freely use the same!

Why, sir, do I mention these historical facts? Not for the purpose of raking up the embers of ancient animosities, but for the purpose of showing that, in restoring the privileges of the Catholics, we are performing an act of justice, and vindicating the Revolution from the stain of this act of perfidy. Men who have forgotten every circumstance of that great event, which connects it with the cause of civil and religious freedom,

affect to call this breach of faith and honour one of the sacred principles of our constitution. It is a miserable perversion of understanding which can forget everything sacred and animating in that glorious struggle, which can fling away as dross the precious attestation which it bears to the just rights of the people, which would bury in eternal oblivion the awful lesson which it has taught to their rulers; but consecrates and embalms this single act of injustice, which disgraces it.

Sir, I am satisfied that the illustrious persons who perfected the Revolution were not aware of the injustice done to Ireland. In the crowded events of that day the stipulations might not have been fully known, and there have been at all times a set of slaves ready, in this country, to defame and to defraud their native land, to traffic on the calamities of their countrymen. I will go further, and suppose that the severe necessity of the times may have made it impossible to avoid an act of injustice; but I will not therefore confound the deviation with the rule; I cannot trample on the principle and worship the exception. It might as well be said that to restore the Danish fleet would be a violation of the laws of nature and of nations, because a deplorable necessity had compelled us to violate these laws by seizing it. I have, perhaps, dwelt too long on this part of the subject, but I felt anxious to meet the cry that this great charter of our freedom is at variance with the rights of the people. The great men of that day had deeply studied the laws and constitution of their country; with ardent feelings and sublime conceptions, they made no unnecessary breach on any ancient usage; no wanton encroachment of any rights of people or of king: not like our modern improvers, who hold for nothing the wisdom which has preceded them, and set up their own crude concep-

tions, with an utter contempt for all the sacred lore of their ancestors. They committed no rude outrage on those who had gone before them; they entailed no odious bondage on those who were to succeed them: with the modesty and simplicity which characterize great minds, they declared the essential rights of the constitution. They saw that the system of the Reformation would be incomplete, unless the king, who was the temporal head of the Church, should be in communion with that Church; they therefore enacted that he should hold his crown only while he adhered to his religion. They declared the throne unalterably Protestant—they declared the religion of the State unalterably Protestant; and, having thus laid the firm foundation of civil and religious freedom, they left all other considerations open to the progress of time and to the wisdom of posterity.

That time has come, and that posterity is now called upon to decide. We are fighting the same battle, in which the illustrious deliverer of these countries was engaged—we are defending the liberties of Europe and of the world, against the same unchangeable and insatiable ambition which then assailed them—we are engaged with an enemy far more formidable than Louis XIV., whether we consider the vastness of his plans, the consummateness of his skill, his exhaustless resources, or his remorseless application of them. But if our dangers are aggravated, our means of safety are increased. William III. was obliged to watch, with a jealous eye, the movements of one half of his subjects, whilst he employed the energies of the other. We have it in our power to unite them all, by one great act of national justice. If we do not wantonly and obstinately fling away the means which God's providence has placed within our grasp, we may bring the energies of all our

people, with one hand and heart, to strike against the common enemy.

Sir, there is a kind of circular reasoning which seems, at some public meetings, to pass for full proof. They say that this measure invades the constitution, because it endangers the Church; and they say it endangers the Church, because it invades the constitution. Sir, it is not sought to affect the Church establishment—to take away its possessions, to degrade its rank, or to touch its emoluments. Its doctrines and its discipline are not interfered with. This is no attempt to include the Catholic within the pale of the Protestant Church, nor to give him any share in its establishment What is meant by the cry of danger to the Church? Is it that the measure will be immediately injurious to the Church, or that it will endanger the Church by enabling the Catholics hereafter to overturn it? In the first point of view, the only immediate effect it has is to open the honours of the State to all other descriptions of subjects, as well as to those who profess the established religion. Is it meant to be argued that the Protestant religion will be deserted, unless a temporal bonus is held out to those who adhere to it? Do they mean to recruit for the establishment by a bounty from the State? The supposition is too abhorrent from the spirit of Christianity, and too degrading to the dignity of the Church. Then, as to danger—the overthrow of the Protestant establishment—how is this to be effected? In Parliament, or out of Parliament? By force or by legislation? If by force, how does the removal of civil disabilities enable them? Does it not make it much more unlikely that they should make the attempt? And if they should make it, will not the removal of the real grievance deprive them of the co-operation of the moderate and the honest? If the latter,

is it really apprehended that the number of members let in would be strong enough to overrule the Protestants, and force a law to pull down the establishment? Would you have the returns much more favourable to the Catholics than they are at present? If the entire one hundred members were to be Catholic, could such a measure, in the range of human possibility, be successful, or could it seriously enter into the contemplation of any man in his senses? The apprehension, when it undergoes the test of close examination, is perfectly chimerical. These are not the fruits of the wholesome caution of statesmen, but the reveries of disordered brains. But if you reject this measure now, and postpone it to times of difficulty and danger, will the interest of the Protestant Church be better guarded? Grant it now, and you grant it as a matter of grace, to which you may annex every fair and reasonable condition; but if you find it necessary to resort to it in some hour of dismay and adversity, when the storm is blowing and the public institutions are rocking and toppling, will the establishment be perfectly secure? Again, if you grant it now, you give it to a class as much inferior in property as they are superior in numbers. Now, it is a truth, as certain as any in political economy, that at no very distant period, the wealth of the country must become diffused pretty nearly in proportion to its relative population. Will the Protestants of Ireland thank you for deferring the adjustment of this question until it shall be demanded by people having as great an ascendancy in wealth as in population? Sir, these are serious practical considerations, and the clergy of this country would do well to weigh them and to reflect upon them. These are questions much more of policy than of religion, and it is not without deep regret that I see any portion of that respectable body interpose themselves

betweem the wisdom of the legislature and the temporal interests of the subject, with such a tone and such a manner as some of them have assumed on this occasion, If the interests of religion or the rights of their order are at stake, they are entitled to come forward as a body—even if the matter is merely political, they are entitled to come forward as individuals; but that any of them should adopt the present tone of unqualified remonstrance, because the Commons of England propose to consider the political claims of their fellow-Christians and fellow-subjects, with a view to a final and amicable adjustment, does not seem calculated to advance the real interests of religion.

Sir, religion is degraded when it is brandished as a political weapon—and there is no medium in the use of it; either it is justified by holy zeal and fervent piety, or the appeal to it becomes liable to the most suspicious imputation. Sir, I consider the safety of the State as essentially interwoven with the integrity of the establishment. The established religion is the child of freedom. The Reformation grew out of the free spirit of bold investigation; in its turn it repaid the obligation, with more than filial gratitude, and contributed, with all its force, to raise the fabric of our liberties. Our civil and religious liberties would each of them lose much of their security if they were not so deeply indented each with the other. The Church need not be apprehensive. It is a plant of the growth of three hundred years; it has struck its roots into the centre of the State, and nothing short of a political earthquake can overturn it: while the State is safe it must be so; but let it not be forgotten that, if the State is endangered it cannot be secure. The Church is protected by the purity of its doctrines and its discipline; the learning and the piety of its ministers; their exem-

plary discharge of every moral and Christian duty; the dignity of its hierarchy, the extent and lustre of its possessions, and the reverence of the public for its ancient and unquestioned rights: to these the Catholic adds the mite of his oath, that he does not harbour the chimerical hope, or the unconstitutional wish to shake or to disturb it; and, therefore, all that is requisite for the security of the Church is that it should remain in repose, on its own deep and immoveable foundations; and this is the policy which the great body of the Church of Ireland, and I believe I may add, of the Church of England, have adopted. If anything could endanger its safety, it would be the conduct of intemperate and officious men, who would erect the Church into a political arbiter, to prescribe rules of imperial policy to the Throne and to the Legislature.

Sir, a reason assigned by the honourable member who last spoke for his change of opinion is, that the sense of the people of England is against the measure. Supposing, for a moment, that the fact were so, to a much greater extent than it really is, would it afford a fair argument for precluding an inquiry and adjustment? I consider it, under any circumstances, an invidious and dangerous topic, to cite the opinion of the people of one part of the empire against the claims of the people of another part of it; but to cite it as an argument against the full discussion of their claims seems utterly unwarrantable. But, when it is recollected that the Union was urged upon the Catholics of Ireland, under the strong expectation that facilities would be consequently afforded to the accomplishment of their wishes, is it not something very like dishonesty to press into the service, against their claims, the opinion of the people of England, and its authority with an English Parliament? If this

question were now under discussion in an Irish Parliament, granted to be in itself just and expedient, called for by all the Catholics and by a great majority of the Protestants of Ireland, would it be endured as an argument that the cry of the people of England was against it? You have taken away that Parliament, under the assurance that, in a British Parliament, that might be safely done, which, in an Irish Parliament, might be difficult or dangerous, and now you say, "True, the measure is right, but the difficulty grows from its being discussed in an English Parliament, because such a Parliament must defer to the prejudices of the English, at the expense of the rights of the Irish people." It may be said that the people of England are no parties to such a compact; but I would appeal to the noble lord,* who, if he did not guarantee it as a compact, was at least a very principal mover in holding it out as an inducement, whether he can countenance such a topic; or can he link himself with those who have, by every indirect method, endeavoured to excite the people of England, in order to fabricate the argument?

Sir, the opinion of the people is undoubtedly entitled to a respectful attention; it is to be listened to—to be canvassed, and, if sound and reasonable, to be deferred to; but the clamour of the people of either country is not to silence the deliberations of Parliament; still less the opinion of a partial and very limited portion of that people; still less an opinion founded on imperfect views;

* Castlereagh. One of Pitt's principal arguments for the Union was, that in a British Parliament, where the weight of the assembly and the constituencies represented would be Protestant, there would be less difficulty in reconciling the claims of the Catholics with the principles of the British constitutional system than in Ireland, where the nation was Catholic, and only the governing class Protestant.

still less an opinion founded upon gross prejudices, excited and kindled by artful and interested misrepresentation, and for the very purpose of preventing fair discussion. The opinion of the people of both countries is to be looked to, and the reasonable foundations of the opinions of both; and in so doing, it is always to be recollected that the sentiments of the Catholics are not to be the less regarded on account of their being principally to be found in one part of the United Kingdom; but if, either from prudence or affection, they would be respected if interspersed through the counties of Great Britain, they are not the less entitled to attention because they constitute four-fifths of the most vulnerable, and not least productive portion of the empire. The question, it is true, is an imperial one: why? Because Ireland is identified with your interest and happiness and glory; her interests are yours, and therefore Irish policy is imperial policy; but it seems rather inconsistent to take cognizance of the question, on the supposition that the interests of the two countries are absolutely the same; and to decide it upon the principle that the rights of the one are essentially and unalterably opposed to the wishes and the safety of the other. But, sir, I utterly deny the fact, that such is the sentiment of the people of England. A pretty bold experiment has been made, and it has failed. The intelligent class of the English public, those who, from property and from education, and from place in society, are entitled to sway the opinion of the legislature on this, or on any political subject, are, I firmly believe, friendly to a full discussion of the Catholic claims, and with a strong leaning in favour of liberality and concession, if they can be made to appear consistent with public safety. This is a tribunal to which an appeal may be fairly made, and to which adequate and ample satis-

faction should be given; and there is no concession or sacrifice not inconsistent with the essential principles of their religion, which the Catholics are not bound to make for the purpose. But, sir, beyond this public, and to the very dregs of the community I fear there are some desperate enough to look. I have heard something like a muttered threat of such an appeal; but I do not believe, though there is much valour at present on this subject, that we need fear a repetition of the outrages of St. George's Fields; I do not fear that our ears will be again assailed by the hell shout of "No Popery." I have heard something more than an insinuation within these walls, that this is a question in which the lower classes of the people are very deeply interested, and that their voice is, on this occasion, to be particularly attended to.

Sir, the doctrine is rather novel in the quarter from which it proceeds, nor am I disposed to give it an unqualified denial. I should be sorry to contend, that the voice of any portion of our fellow-subjects, however humble, should be disregarded. If they complain of grievances by which they are oppressed, of justice withheld, or of anything trenching upon their freedom or their comforts, they are to be heard with patient and with deep attention; and the more humble the situation of the complainants, the more bounden the duty of the representative to listen to them. But, on a subject like the present, where the legislature is called on to withhold the privileges of the constitution from a great proportion of the people, upon supposed principles of state government; when claims of common right are withheld, in deference to sacred and mysterious maxims of imperial policy: on such a subject, I say, it is something more than absurdity to affect a deference for the shouts of the lower orders of the people. Sir, the apprehension of such

an appeal being resorted to need not affect our deliberations; those who intimate such an intention know full well that, though the threat may be endured, the times would not bear the execution of it; they know full well that, if Parliament determines to pursue its steady course of calm investigation and liberal adjustment, there is no faction in the State which can effectually interpose between the sovereign authority of the legislature and the just demands of the people.

The conduct of the Roman Catholics of Ireland has been resorted to as an argument for abandoning the pledge of the last session. Sir, I am not the advocate of their intemperance; I am free to say that there have been some proceedings, on the part of the public bodies, who affect to act for them, altogether unjustifiable. Their attempts to dictate to the entire body how they are to act on each particular political occurrence, their presuming to hold an inquisition on the conduct of individuals in the exercise of the elective franchise, and putting them under the ban of their displeasure, because they vote for their private friends and abide by their plighted engagements; all this is a degree of inquisitorial authority unexampled and insufferable; and this, by persons professing themselves the advocates of unbounded freedom and unlimited toleration, at the moment when they are extending their unparalleled tyranny into the domestic arrangements of every Catholic family in the country. Sir, I am equally disgusted with the tone of unqualified demand and haughty rejection of all condition or accommodation, so confidently announced by them; nor can I palliate the intemperance of many of their public speeches, nor the exaggeration and violence of some of their printed publications. To this tone I never wish to see the

legislature yield; but, as this indecent clamour is not to compel them to yield what is unreasonable, I trust it will not influence them to withhold what is just.

Sir, it appears to me most unfair to visit on the Roman Catholics the opinions and the conduct of such public assemblies as profess to act for them; if they labour under a real and continuing grievance, and one which justifies, on their part, a continued claim, they must act through the medium of popular assemblies, and must, of course, be exposed to all the inconveniences which attend discussion in assemblies. In all such places, we know that unbounded applause attends the man who occupies the extreme positions of opinion, and that the extravagance of his expression of such opinion will not be calculated to diminish it. That there may be many individuals anxious to promote their own consequence at the expense of the party whose interest they profess to advocate, is an evil inseparable from such a state of things; and, amongst those who sincerely wish to promote the interests of the cause, much may fairly be attributed to the heat naturally generated by long-continued opposition; much to the effects of disappointed hope; much to the resentment excited and justified by insolent and virulent opposition. But, sir, I should unworthily shrink from my duty, if I were not to avow my opinion, that the unfortunate state of the public mind in Ireland is, above all things, imputable to the conduct of the Government. Without recurring unnecessarily to subjects which have been already discussed in this house, I may be allowed to say that the rash interference with the right of petitioning has given deep and just offence to the entire Catholic body. They have been compelled to rally round their constitutional privileges, and make common cause. Those excesses, which two years since

would have been eagerly repressed by the Catholics themselves, might now, I fear, be regarded with some degree of favourable allowance on their part.

I must say that the country has not been fairly dealt with on this subject. It is the bounden duty of the Government to make up their mind, and to act a consistent part. If this measure is utterly inadmissible, expectation should be put down by the certainty of rejection: resentment should be allayed by the clear exposition of the necessity which bars; the fever of the public mind should be subdued, and all the means of conciliation consistent with such a system should be resorted to. If, on the other hand, this claim may and ought to be acted on, it should be frankly received and honestly forwarded; every facility for its accomplishment should be afforded, by tempering and directing the proceedings of those who seek it; by suggesting the conditions and terms on which it should be granted; and by arranging the details, as well as planning the outlines, of such a system. But how can any honest mind be reconciled to the ambiguity in which the cabinet has concealed itself from public view on this great national question, or with what justice can they complain of the madness which grows out of this fever of their own creating.

This is not one of those questions which may be left to time and chance. The exclusion of these millions from the rights of citizenship is either a flagrant injustice, or its necessity springs out of the sacred fountains of the constitution. This is no subject of compromise. Either the claim is forbidden by some imperious principle too sacred to be tampered with, or it is enjoined by a law of reason and justice, which it is oppression to resist. In ordinary cases it sounds well to say that a question is

left to the unbiassed sense of Parliament and people; but that a measure of vital importance, and which has been again and again discussed by all his Majesty's Ministers, should be left to work its own course, and suffered to drift along the tide of parliamentary or popular opinion, seems difficult to understand. That Government should be mere spectators of such a process is novel. But, when it is known that they have all considered it deeply, and formed their opinions decidedly in direct opposition to each other, that, after this, they should consult in the same cabinet, and sit on the same bench, professing a decided opinion in point of theory and a strict neutrality in point of practice; that, on this most angry of all questions, they should suffer the population of the country to be committed in mutual hostility, and convulsed with mutual rancour, aggravated by the uncertainty of the event; producing, on the one hand, all the fury of disappointed hope, on the other side, malignity and hatred, from the apprehension that the measure may be carried, and insolence from every circumstance, public or private, which tends to disappoint or to postpone it; one half the King's Ministers encouraging them to seek, without enabling them to obtain—the other half subdivided; some holding out an ambiguous hope, others announcing a never-ending despair. I ask, is this a state in which the Government of the country has a right to leave it? Some masterpiece of imperial policy must be unfolded, some deep and sacred principle of empire, something far removed from the suspicion of unworthy compromise of principle for power, to reconcile the feelings of the intelligent public, or to uphold a rational confidence in the honesty or seriousness of the Government. The consequences of such conduct are disastrous, not merely in the tumult

and discord which, in this particular instance, they are calculated to excite, but in their effect upon the character of the Government and the times.

Sir, I repeat it, the Irish Catholics have not been fairly dealt with; the Government has not, in any instance, come into amicable contact with them; it has not consulted, nor soothed, nor directed them; it has addressed them only in the stern voice of the law, in state prosecution, and it is most unjust to charge against them the anger which has been kindled by such treatment. But, sir, I ask what have the Catholics done? Look to their actions for the last century, and do not judge them by a few intemperate expressions or absurd publications—these are not the views of statesmen—you are considering the policy of centuries and the fate of a people, and will you condescend to argue, on such a subject, the merits of a pamphlet, or to scan the indiscretions of an angry speaker at a public meeting? Of this I am sure, that if the violence with which the demand has been urged by some of its advocates is to create a prejudice against it, the virulence with which it has been rejected by some of its opponents ought to be allowed to have some operation in its favour; perhaps under these opposite impulses of passion a chance may be afforded of reason having fair play, and a hearing may be procured for the merits of the case. This, too, should not be lost sight of: that the Catholics are seeking their rights; that they are opposed by an adverse Government, many of whom declare that no concession on their part could be effectual, but that their doom is interminable exclusion. May I ask, whether it is fair to require, or reasonable to expect, that the Catholics should, under such circumstances, exercise a fastidious delicacy in the selection of their friends; and say to

those who profess themselves their advocates, "We refuse your aid, your language is not sufficiently measured; you urge our demands in too warm and too unqualified a tone, and we prefer the chances which may arise from throwing ourselves on the mercy of our enemies."

Sir, I will not affect to disguise the fact, that there are persons in Ireland who look to revolution and separation. I certainly do not mean to say, nor do I believe, that those whose warmth of expression has been so much and so justly complained of are, in the most remote degree, liable to the suspicion of being joined with such a party. The separatists are, in my judgment, neither numerous nor, in themselves, formidable; and of this I am sure, that they tremble at the prospect of the adjustment of the Catholic claims, as a measure deadly to their views. Is it a wise policy, is it a course which any Government can justify to the country, to recruit for these public enemies, by endeavouring to embody the legitimate claims of the Catholics with their wild and pernicious projects? Is it not madness to oppose the same blind and indiscriminate resistance to the honest objects of the great untainted landed and commercial interests of the Catholic people, and to affect to confound them in a common cause with those miserable enemies of public freedom and safety?

Sir, if I am asked what course, in my opinion, should be pursued in this momentous business, I cannot answer without doubt and distrust in my own judgment, where I may differ from many whose opinion I highly respect; but it is fair to say that the opinion which I have always entertained and always expressed, publicly and privately, on this subject, is, that this measure cannot be finally and satisfactorily adjusted, unless some arrangement

shall be made with respect to the Roman Catholic clergy, and some security afforded to the State against foreign interference. On the best consideration I have been able to give the subject, and on the fullest communication I have been able to obtain on it, I am satisfied that such security may be afforded without interfering in any degree with the essentials of their religion; and if so, the mere circumstance of its being required is a sufficient reason for conceding it. This is not a struggle for the triumph of one party of the State over another; it is a great national sacrifice of mutual prejudices for the common good; and any opportunity of gratifying the Protestant mind should be eagerly seized by the Catholic, even if the condition required were uncalled for by any real or well-founded apprehension. But I must go a step further, and avow that the State has, in my opinion, a right to require some fair security against foreign influence in its domestic concerns. What this security may be, provided it shall be effectual, ought, as I conceive, to be left to the option of the Catholic body. I am little solicitous about the form, so that the substance is attained. As a veto has been objected to, let it not be required; but let the security be afforded, either by domestic nomination of the clergy or in any shape or form which shall exclude the practical effect of foreign interference. Let them be liberally provided for by the State, let them be natives of the country and educated in the country, and let the full and plenary exercise of spiritual authority by the Pope, which forms an essential part of their religious discipline, remain in all its force; leave to their choice the mode of reconciling these principles, and stand not upon the manner, if the thing be done.

An honourable gentleman asks, will this satisfy the Catholics? I will not be so indiscreet as to answer for what will satisfy them—I believe it will. But it is enough for me to know that this ought to satisfy them; and of this we may be convinced, that we do not enable them to obtain what they ought not, by granting them what they ought to have. But what is the use, it is asked, of a measure proposed as an instrument of peace, if it is likely, on the contrary, to produce nothing but dissatisfaction? I answer, first, I believe it will produce full satisfaction, if frankly proposed and honestly acted on. But if you doubt of this, do not make your proceeding an absolute and a final one; reserve the operation of the act which grants relief (if you think it necessary), until the accompanying measure of security shall be ripened, so as to ensure satisfaction in their enactment; declare your principles of security, and your conditions, and let the operation of your law, or the effect of your resolution, await the desire of the Catholic body, signified or fairly understood, with respect to them. Pursue this course, put this measure into the hands of those in whom the Catholics can place confidence, or give them such a Parliamentary pledge, that they may see that the accomplishment of their wishes is dependent on their own good sense and moderation; and, I have no doubt, they will not be wanting to contribute their part to this great national work of strength and union. In all events you will have discharged your duty. You will have given satisfaction to the honest and to the reasonable. You will have separated the sound from the unsound, and you will leave the bigot or the incendiary, stripped of all his terrors, by depriving him of all his grievances. Sir, I have done. I may be in error; but I have not sacrificed

to interest or to prejudice, and I have spoken my sentiments in the sincerity of my heart.

The House does not seem to have been at all prepared for this wonderful effort. The effect produced by it was very great. Each speaker, as he rose on either side of the debate, was proud to add his testimony of appreciation. But of all the praises that were bestowed upon the orator that night, none, we may be sure, fell more gratefully upon his ear than that of his old antagonist, Castlereagh. With characteristic spirit and generosity he forgot the terrible blows which he had received in fair fight in the Irish Parliament, and began his reply on the part of Government by expressing a hope "that what he had to say might be attributed to sincere respect, which he thought due to everything that fell from so distinguished a character as the right hon. and learned gentleman, whose talents excited the highest admiration, and whose convincing speech could never be forgotten." Mr. Grattan's motion was carried, and the House went into committee, and at last produced a Bill which was afterwards made the foundation of the Emancipation Act.

Plunket's next speech in the House of Commons was a very remarkable example of his powers of attack. It was delivered in the debate on Lord Morpeth's motion for a vote of censure

upon the expressions used by Mr. Speaker Abbot, at the close of the session of 1813, when addressing the Prince Regent at the Bar of the House of Lords. On this occasion the victim of Plunket's invective was in a doubly awkward position, as he was personally addresed in every sentence, and had his attention called to each stinging censure by an unmerciful "you, sir." As has already been stated, the Catholic question was brought forward in the session of 1813 by Mr. Grattan, and his motion for a committee of the whole House to inquire into the laws affecting the Roman Catholics was carried by a majority of forty votes. In the committee the Right Hon. Charles Abbot (the Speaker) had distinguished himself by a steady opposition to many of the concessions which were proposed, and finally moved a resolution which went to exclude the Roman Catholics from sitting in either House of Parliament. This resolution having been carried by a majority of four, 251 having voted for it and 247 against it, Mr. Ponsonby withdrew the Catholic Bill as no longer worthy the acceptance of the Catholics nor of the support of the friends of concession.

At the close of the session the Prince Regent was addressed at the Bar of the House of Lords by the Speaker, holding in his hand the Vote of Credit Bill. In the course of his address, which

embraced many topics, particularly the splendid successes of the Peninsula war and the great achievements of the Duke of Wellington, the Speaker alluded to the failure of the Catholic Bill, and assigned, as the cause of its rejection, reasons which might always be urged against its adoption. It was considered that the observations of the Speaker reflected upon those who had supported the measure, that he had misrepresented the opinions of the majority, and that in thus pronouncing a definitive judgment on a case which was certain of being again discussed he had exceeded his duties as Speaker.

On the 22nd April, 1814, Lord Morpeth brought the subject of the Speaker's speech before the House. He bore witness to the high station of the Speaker, to the fact of his being a member for Oxford University—to the zeal with which he discharged his duties in the House—all these considerations, he said, gave surpassing weight to everything he said. He declared that he fully acquiesced in many of the topics which that speech contained; "but," said he, "I must quit these cheering and enlivening topics, and it is to remarks of another nature that I must now call the attention of the House. I must request the Clerk to read the resolution upon which the Catholic Bill of last session was founded, and the preamble of

the Bill itself." (The resolutions and preamble were read at the table.) "And now I beg leave to apply the commentary of Mr. Speaker to the text that has just been read. 'Other momentous changes,' said the Speaker, 'have been proposed. Adhering, however, to those laws which have made the Throne, the Parliament, and Government of this country fundamentally Protestant, we have not consented to allow that those who acknowledge a foreign jurisdiction should administer the powers and jurisdiction of this realm; willing, nevertheless, and willing as I trust we always shall be, to allow the largest scope to religious toleration.'" Lord Morpeth added that he had embodied his observations upon this passage in a proposition which he would submit to the House. Resolved—

"That it is contrary to parliamentary usage and to the spirit of parliamentary proceeding, for the Speaker, unless by special direction of the House, to inform his Majesty, either at the Bar of the House of Lords or elsewhere, of any proposal made to the House, by any of its members, either in the way of Bill or motion, or to acquaint the Throne with any proceedings relative to such proposals, *until they shall be consented to by the House.*"

He concluded by moving that a special entry be made in the Journals of the proposition

which he had announced as the foundation of his speech.

The Speaker, in reply, relied upon the authority of Mr. Hatsell, and quoted the following passage in that gentleman's work :—"It has been customary for the Speaker, in presenting any Bill of Supply at the close of the Session, to recapitulate the principal objects which have employed the attention of the Commons during their sitting." He also referred to former speeches, of which there were only two which came to the precise point of the Speaker noticing a Bill negatived in either House of Parliament. The first of these occurred in the year 1753, when Mr. Onslow was speaker. The second had arisen in the Irish Parliament in the year 1792 (Mr. Foster, Speaker). Mr. Whitbread (who followed), in dealing with the second of these precedents, asked that the speech of Mr. Foster on the occasion alluded to should be read. And when this had been done, he proceeded to say that "he called upon any gentleman who heard him, to show any part of it, by which the conduct of the right hon. gentleman could be justified. All that Mr. Foster had said was, that 'the only means of preserving the blessings which the country enjoyed was to maintain the Protestant ascendancy inviolate.' He did not inform the

Lord Lieutenant, as the right hon. gentleman had informed the Throne, that the state had been endangered by certain measures which were intended to give the Roman Catholics the right to sit in Parliament, but which had been defeated by the House of Commons, who thought it not expedient to alter the Protestant constitution of the empire. There was not one point of ground in Mr. Speaker Foster's speech on which the right hon. gentleman's conduct could stand."

Mr. Whitbread concluded by moving an amendment, which he afterwards withdrew, to the following effect, "That Mr. Speaker in the speech which he addressed to the Prince Regent was guilty of a violation of the trust reposed in him, and of a breach of the privileges of this House, of which he is chosen the guardian and protector." After Mr. Bankes had proposed a resolution justifying the conduct of the Speaker, and after the House had been addressed by Mr. Wynn, Mr. Rose, Sir John Newport, Mr. Grant, and others, Mr. Plunket rose and said,—

Sir, after the long and able arguments which we have heard on this subject, and more particularly after the ample justice which has been done to it in the eloquent and admirable speech of the honourable gentleman below me (Mr. Grant), it may appear unnecessary or presumptuous further to occupy the attention of the House. Feeling, however, as I do on this important

occasion, I own I cannot reconcile myself to remaining wholly silent. I completely concur with you, sir, that the present question is one wholly unconnected with the question of Catholic emancipation. We are not now to consider what it may or may not be right to do with respect to this latter. We are not to ascertain the present opinion of the House upon it. The question is, whether, the House having come to a resolution with respect to the Catholics, you, sir, were authorized to convey to the throne an intimation of that proceeding, accompanied by a censure on those who had endeavoured to follow it up by a legislative measure.

Sir, I declare most solemnly, that if the sentiments which you expressed to the throne had been as friendly to the Catholic cause as they were certainly hostile to it, I should equally have concurred in the present motion. It is true, as it has been justly said, this is not a party or a personal question. And nothing, sir, but the most imperious sense of duty could justify the censure of your conduct. But if any man feels that a vital and important part of the constitution has been assailed, and that you have done that which, if it were established as a precedent, would overturn and destroy the constitution itself; and if that man should refuse to accede to the motion of the noble lord, either out of deference to you, sir, or from any unworthy exultation at the attack made by you on so large a portion of the community, no words are sufficiently strong to describe the meanness of such a dereliction of duty on the one hand, or of such an unworthy betraying of the trusts reposed in a representative of the people on the other.

Sir, I am free to say, that the speech made by you to the throne, at the close of the last session, was one of the most formidable attacks on the constitution of

Parliament that has occurred since the Revolution. It was an attack materially aggravated by its having proceeded from a person the natural guardian of that constitution. And, sir, it is peculiarly unfortunate, that in this instance we cannot assert our own rights without impairing your dignity; however anxious we may be to abstain from everything like asperity, and to treat you, sir, with all that respect to which you are so amply entitled. Subject to this last consideration, I shall make my observations upon the question with as much freedom and latitude, and discharge my duty as unrestrainedly, as you, sir, have done, in what I have no doubt you conscientiously conceived to have been yours.

Sir, there is no subject upon which this House has always evinced so much anxious jealousy as that its proceedings should be exempt from all control and interference on the part of the Crown. Some communication between the Throne and Parliament must undoubtedly exist; but the mode of this communication is perfectly defined and ascertained. If the Throne wishes to communicate with Parliament, that communication is made either by a formal speech from the Throne or by a message. But the object of such communication always is to invite Parliament to deliberate on some proposed measure, and never to control or interfere with any deliberations already entered into. So on the other hand, if either House wish to communicate with the Throne, that communication is made either by address or by resolution; and the object of such communication is, not to ask the advice of the Throne on any subject upon which Parliament may be deliberating, but to give to the Throne such advice as Parliament may think it expedient to offer; for this

plain reason, that we are the constitutional advisers of the Throne, but that the Throne is not the constitutional adviser of Parliament. Advice from the Throne would have too much the air of command, to be consistent with the freedom of discussion in this House. Beyond the limits which I have mentioned, there is no constitutional channel of communication between the Throne and Parliament, save when we present our Bills for the royal assent or dissent. This is so clear, that it is generally acknowledged that if, sir, you had no Bill to present, you would have no right to address the Throne at all. Accordingly when you uttered the address which is the subject of our present deliberation, you held in your hand the Vote of Credit Bill, and you concluded that address with praying the royal assent to the Bill. Had you not held such a Bill, your speech would have been an absolute intrusion, wholly unwarranted by parliamentary usage, or by the constitution.

I do not mean to say, sir, that you were under the necessity of strictly confining yourself in your address to the subject of the Bill which you presented. It was perfectly allowable, that your speech should be graced and ornamented by allusions to other matters. If, sir, you had described generally the measures adopted by Parliament, or had descanted on topics of general policy, however we might have considered your opinion as a mistaken one, the promulgation of it could never have been deemed a violation of our privileges. Unless you had alluded to matters pending in Parliament, the observations which you had thought proper to make might have been thought light or unnecessary, but could not have been characterized as unconstitutional. This remark applies to what has been said of my right honourable friend the late Speaker of the Parliament in

Ireland (Mr. Foster). My right honourable friend did certainly make the question of Catholic emancipation and Protestant ascendancy the subject of a speech to the Throne; and in doing so he had no reason to congratulate himself on his prudence; for in the very next session, his principles and his predictions were overturned altogether. But this was imprudence only, and not a violation of parliamentary privilege. It has not been so considered. A solitary petition was presented to the House on the subject; but no member of the Irish Parliament had made it a question of parliamentary discussion.

It is on these grounds, sir, that I perfectly concur in the propriety of the general observations contained in your speech at the close of the last session. In that style of dignified congratulation which so well becomes you, you spoke of the success of our brave fleets and armies, and conferred the just meed of your eloquent praise on their gallant leaders. I am sure, sir, that every one of us must be proud and gratified when he hears you deliver yourself on such subjects with so much elevation and propriety of manner. But when, because you are the organ of communication between this House and the Throne, you proceed to notice subjects controverted in this House, you will find it difficult to discover precedents in justification of your conduct; and still further, when you mention propositions made here, and not acceded to, but rejected, you place yourself in a situation still less capable of defence. On this part of the subject, the remarks made by the honourable gentleman below me (Mr. Grant) are unanswerable. As that honourable gentleman justly observed, if a measure passes in Parliament no single person is responsible for that which is an act of the whole House. But it is im-

possible for you, sir, to state that a proposed measure has been rejected without implying a censure on the individual or individuals by whom that proposition was made. Accordingly, our rule of proceeding with respect to Bills is founded on this consideration. When a Bill is sent to the other house, or is presented to the Throne for the royal assent or dissent, it does not bear on the face of it whether or not it passed unanimously, or what was the amount of the majority by which it was carried. And why? Because this House will never suffer the state of its divisions and parties to be subject to the direction or to be under the influence or control of any other tribunal.

The authority of Mr. Hatsell has been dwelt upon with much emphasis. As a member of the legislature, I deny that, in our decisions on great constitutional questions, we are to take Mr. Hatsell's publication as a text-book. We are not to be told that we must learn the principles of the British constitution from Mr. Hatsell's work. But, after all, what is there in that work which bears on the present question? Mr. Hatsell states, and states truly, that when the Speaker presents a money bill at the foot of the Throne, he may advert, not to the subject of that bill alone, but to other business which Parliament may have transacted. But does he say that the Speaker may advert to pending or rejected measures? Nay, up to this very moment, after all the inquiries made by yourself, sir, so capable of deep research, and after all the inquiries made by all your numerous friends, has a single precedent been found of a Speaker's having referred in his speech to the Throne to any measure which had been rejected by the House?

And let it be recollected, that the measure to which you thought proper to refer was still pending. For, what was the state of the proceedings on the Catholic

question? A resolution had been agreed to, to take into consideration, in a committee of the whole house, the laws affecting the Roman Catholics, with a view to their amicable adjustment. The committee met, and resolutions were passed, declaring it expedient to admit the Catholics to seats in Parliament, and to other powers and jurisdictions, under certain provisions for the security of the Protestant establishment. A Bill was introduced to that effect, and the second reading agreed to by a considerable majority of the house. Everything, therefore, sir, of which you could properly take cognizance was favourable to the Catholic cause. But in the speech which you made to the Throne you passed over what alone you had a right to know, and what, if communicated, would have made an impression favourable to the cause of the Catholics, and you resorted to that which you had no right to know, and by an unjustifiable perversion sought to make an impression inimical to that cause. For, sir, you were no more competent to report to the Throne the proceedings of the committee of this House than any other member of the committee. It was not even necessary that you should be present in that committee. Mr. Hatsell so says. It happened, however, that you were there, and that you gave your opinion on the Bill in progress. Was it as Speaker that you gave that opinion? Certainly not. You gave it as member for the University of Oxford.

But it may be said that this is a question of mere form. Sir, the forms of Parliament are essential to the preservation of the privileges of Parliament. But, sir, in taking the liberty to report the opinions of that committee, did you truly report them? On the contrary, you totally, though I am sure not wilfully, misrepresented them. The opposition to the proposition rejected

in the committee was grounded on a variety of considerations. Some opposed it in consequence of the intemperate conduct of certain public bodies in Ireland; others because of the writings which had been diffused in that country; some wished the change to be deferred until a time of peace; others were desirous that the see of Rome should first be consulted.

With all this variety of sentiment, how, sir, were you competent to say what were the opinions by which the majority of this House on that occasion were swayed? I will venture to assert, that not ten of that majority were perfectly agreed on that subject; and yet you took upon yourself, in the name of that majority, to declare your own opinion as theirs. Nay, even in that respect you were incorrect. The member for the University of Oxford has a right to complain that the Speaker misrepresented him. That right honourable member declared, that in his opinion, many powers and jurisdictions might be safely conferred on the Catholics. He declared that they might be eligible to the magistracy—there was jurisdiction; he declared that they might be raised to any rank in the army, except that of commander-in-chief—there was power; a jurisdiction and a power by no means harmless, if improperly used. Again, a great number of those who composed the majority, voted on the ground that the question was a religious one. Have those individuals no right to complain of the Speaker, for declaring that the House considered the question not as a religious, but as a political one; and that if the see of Rome were released from foreign influence, the danger of allowing Catholics to sit in Parliament would cease? Will the member for Armagh, and those who think with him, consent thus to have their opposition disrobed of all those important considerations, which arise out of

religious views of the subject? Will they allow the Catholics, if they disavow the supremacy of the Pope, to come here and legislate for Protestant England? In my judgment, therefore, sir, you misrepresented the opinion of the majority of this House, as well as your own.

One striking fact you wholly abstained from mentioning. You never told the Throne that, notwithstanding all the means used on the occasion, notwithstanding the temporary difficulties arising out of various causes, notwithstanding the powerful influence exercised in various quarters, there were still two hundred and forty-seven members of this House who declared their readiness to admit the Catholics into Parliament on the principles of the Bill which was then under discussion. Will any man lay his hand on his breast, and declare upon his honour, that he thinks you were authorized, on a decision by a majority of four, to represent to the Crown that the question was put finally at rest? Was it not evident that the subject must return to be considered by Parliament? And if so brought back, with what impartiality could Parliament proceed with respect to it, if, by any indirect means, the artillery of royal influence was brought to bear on their march?

Suppose, sir, that in reply to you his Royal Highness the Prince Regent had been pleased to say to you, "I feel great surprise and indignation that two hundred and forty-seven members of the House of Commons are so lost to a sense of their duty, as to wish to change those laws by which the Throne, the Parliament, and the Government of the country are made fundamentally Protestant;" would any member of that minority have endured such an expression? On the other hand, suppose his Royal Highness had said, "I lament that the

laborious exertions of so large a number of members of the House of Commons as two hundred and forty-seven have been disappointed; and I trust when temporary obstacles are removed, and when the suggestions of reason and wisdom become prevalent, their efforts will prove successful;" would such a declaration have been endured by any member of the majority? Would it not have been asked, what right the Throne possessed to interfere with the proceedings of Parliament, to lecture their past conduct, and to school their future?

And here, sir, I must observe, that an honourable gentleman on the floor (Mr. Bankes) has contended that there is no difficulty in this question, because your speech was not made until the end of the session. It is then of no importance if we subject ourselves to be schooled and lectured by the Throne; it is of no importance that we should be liable to this annual audit and account, provided it take place at the close of our sittings! Such an occurrence would have no effect on the deliberations of the next session! And, besides, if this annual audit were once established, the honourable member for Corfe-Castle is too fond of accuracy not to think it necessary, sir, to add to your report a specification of the numbers of those who might vote on any particular measure, the names of the voters, and so on, until the whole of our mystery is exposed to the eye of royalty!

With respect to your speech, sir, I have another observation to make; it regards its ambiguity. The words of it are capable of two opposite constructions—of a construction unwarrantable, and intolerant towards the Catholics, and of a construction as tolerant as their warmest friends could desire. You say, sir, that we have determined to exclude them from the privileges which they require "as long as they shall obey a foreign

jurisdiction." Now, what does this expression mean? If by "foreign jurisdiction" is meant the spiritual jurisdiction of the Pope, then the Catholics will be excluded as long as they remain Catholics. But if it merely means temporal, or indeed ecclesiastical jurisdiction within the realm, then no friend of the Catholic cause in this House would, I am sure, wish it to prosper on any other terms. Again, sir, you say in your speech that Parliament have not consented to do so and so. I am persuaded that no special pleading will be resorted to in defence of this passage, and I appeal to the common sense of all who hear me, whether the statement that "momentous changes had been proposed for our consideration, but that adhering to those laws by which the Throne, the Parliament, and the Government of this country are made fundamentally Protestant, we would not consent to those changes"—is it not a distinct implication of an intention in some persons, by proposing such changes, to destroy "the laws by which the Throne, the Parliament, and the Government of this country are made fundamentally Protestant?" Sir, recollecting that one of the essential features of the resolutions on which the Catholic Bill was founded was, the distinct declaration that the Protestant establishment should be effectually secured, I ask you, how you can reconcile to any feelings of justice the implied statement that two hundred and forty-seven members of this House were anxious to introduce changes subversive of that establishment? For one, I loudly disclaim my share of such an imputation. If there be here one man of that number who deserves it, let him take the only opportunity of proving his demerit, by voting for your exculpation. Sir, it is a proposition which every honourable gentleman present would not merely

not consent to, but which he would reject with scorn and indignation.

One word more: this speech, which in my opinion was a violation of the privileges of Parliament, and which misrepresented the conduct and sentiments of all parties, appears to me to have been wholly uncalled for. There was nothing, sir, in the Bill which you held in your hand at the time you uttered it, or in any other Bill which passed during the last session, that required such an exposition. When you adverted to the splendid victories of our illustrious commander who has gained such transcendent fame, when you spoke of the passage of the Douro, of the battles of Roleia, of Vimiera, of Talavera, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, the feelings of all who heard you vibrated in unison with your own. Every heart exulted, and every Irish heart peculiarly exulted that Ireland had given birth to such a hero. Was that a well-chosen moment, sir, to pronounce the irrevocable doom of those who, under their immortal commander, had opened the sluices of their hearts' blood in the service of the empire? It was the custom in Rome to introduce a slave into their triumphal processions, not for the purpose of insulting the captive, but to remind the conqueror of the instability of human glory. But you, sir, while you were binding the wreath round the brow of the conqueror, assured him that his victorious followers must never expect to participate in the fruits of his valour, but that they who had shed their blood in achieving victory were to be the only persons who were not to share the profits of success in the rights of citizens.

After Mr. Canning and Mr. Turner had taken part in the debate, the House divided on Lord Morpeth's motion. There appeared, ayes, 106;

noes, 274—majority, 168. Mr. Bankes's resolution was afterwards carried.

For eight years after the failure of Mr. Grattan's Bill, in 1813, the cause of emancipation seemed almost hopeless. In 1814 Napoleon was a prisoner in Elba, and in 1815 his power was finally overthrown. With a returning sense of national security, the indifference of the Imperial Government to the complaints of the Irish Catholics seemed to return, and though the claims of the latter were every year brought before Parliament, their petitions were not again so far successful as even to be referred to a committee until the year 1821.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GRENVILLE PARTY JOIN THE TORIES—NAPOLEON'S ESCAPE FROM ELBA—PLUNKET'S VIEWS—GRATTAN ON BURKE AND FOX—PLUNKET'S SPEECH ON THE WAR—THE "PETERLOO MASSACRE"—DEBATE ON THE AMENDMENT TO THE ADDRESS—PLUNKET'S SPEECH — SEDITIOUS MEETINGS PREVENTION BILL — HENRY BROUGHAM—PLUNKET'S LETTER TO SIR JOHN NEWPORT—LETTER FROM LORD LANSDOWNE.

IN the interval that elapsed between 1813 and 1821, when Plunket delivered his second great oration on the question of Catholic Emancipation, he many times addressed the House of Commons on various subjects. I shall call the reader's attention to two of these speeches only, each of which was spoken in a very remarkable debate, and under very peculiar circumstances; one on the question of renewing the war with Napoleon (May 25, 1815), the other with reference to the conduct of the magistrates in what is called the Peterloo Massacre (Nov. 23, 1819).

On both these occasions Lord Grenville and his immediate followers joined the ranks of the Tories, and Plunket found himself speaking and voting along with the men to whom he had been constantly opposed on the Catholic question.

In 1815, so soon as Napoleon's escape from Elba became known in Europe, the allied powers, who had concluded with him the peace of Paris, resumed their combined action, in order to redress the violation of that compact. When the Prince Regent communicated this intelligence, by message, to the House of Commons, the war policy received the hearty support of a vast majority of that assembly. But the extreme section of the Whigs, true to their old principles, refused to sanction an interference with the internal arrangements of another country, aimed at the destruction of a government which was said to enjoy the enthusiastic support of a large section of its people. Another portion of the great liberal party, however, who may be best described as "anti-Jacobin Whigs," went willingly with the Goverment.

The line of conduct taken by Plunket's nearest political associates at this conjuncture, and afterwards in 1819, in the Peterloo business, was peculiarly in unison with his own political inclination. His mind revolted equally against the sudden and sweeping destruction of ancient institutions, that was advocated throughout Europe by the French Revolutionary propaganda, and against the personal despotism of Napoleon; he exhibits by every act of his life, as well as in

his speeches and letters, an extraordinary horror of the doctrines and the tendencies of that Revolution, and at the same time a detestation and dread of the unprincipled ambition of Bonaparte. In fact his views, both on home and foreign politics, were those of a thoroughly constitutional Whig. He looked at the English system of government with the eye of one who had carefully studied the ancient history of its laws, who had seen the many changes which that system had through centuries undergone—the mighty crises of affairs through which it had come safely, owing to the wisdom and the moderation of the statesmen and the people of England. He believed that the ancient constitution was in his day as plastic and as capable of wise alteration as ever it had been, but he wished to see all necessary changes wrought by the constitutional action of Parliament; and the doctrine that deferred to the people as the immediate depository, as well as the ultimate source, of all political power, seemed to him shallow and dangerous. Further, he had from the first distrusted the promises of Napoleon, and he had at last learned to believe that the instincts and necessities of his position as dictator of the French armies was inconsistent with the security of Europe. It was, therefore, with a hearty goodwill that on this occasion he acted

with his old patrons, Grenville and Grattan, in supporting the Ministry.

These differences amongst the members of the Liberal party are in many respects similar to those which occurred twenty years before, when Fox and Burke severed the strong ties by which they had so long been closely bound; and it is a striking proof of the precision and faithfulness with which party limits and politics were handed down through that generation, to find the parts of Fox and Burke so nearly played out again by their successors, when they themselves had been in their graves, the one for ten and the other for eighteen years. The precedents afforded by the conduct of Burke and of Fox respectively, were of course quoted on either side of the House, and this conflict of authorities gave Grattan an occasion for drawing graphic portraits of these two great statesmen. He said:—

The authority of Mr. Fox has been alluded to; a great authority, and a great man; his name excites tenderness and wonder; to do justice to that immortal person you must not limit your view to this country; his genius was not confined to England, it acted three hundred miles off in breaking the chains of Ireland; it was seen three thousand miles off in communicating freedom to the Americans; it was visible I know not how far off, in ameliorating the condition of the Indian; it was discernible on the coast of Africa in accomplishing the abolition of the slave-trade. You are

to measure the magnitude of his mind by parallels of latitude. His heart was as soft as that of a woman; his intellect was adamant; his weaknesses were virtues; they protected him against the hard habit of a politician, and assisted nature to make him aimable and interesting.

. . . . . .

On the French subject, speaking of authority, we cannot forget Mr. Burke. Mr. Burke, the prodigy of nature and acquisition. He read everything, he saw everything, he foresaw everything. His knowledge of history amounted to a power of foretelling; and when he perceived the wild work that was doing in France, that great political physician, intelligent of symptoms, distinguished between the access of fever and the force of health; and what other men conceived to be the vigour of her constitution, he knew to be no more than the paroxysm of her madness, and then, prophet-like, he pronounced the destinies of France, and, in his prophetic fury, admonished nations.

The speech from which I have extracted this passage was long and powerful, and has been considered by many the best that Grattan ever uttered in the British House of Commons. The subject was certainly well calculated to call out all the chivalry of his nature, and rouse the spirit-stirring enthusiasm of his eloquence. Plunket also is said by his contemporaries to have made on this occasion one of his most successful efforts; though the topics of this debate were not so well suited to develope his special powers. The only report of this speech that has come down to us is

so clumsily condensed that I shall quote from it but a few sentences.

Sir, as to the right of interfering with the internal arrangements of a people, I must admit, that so long as those internal arrangements do not menace the peace and security of other countries, there can be no right to interfere; but when the internal arrangements of one country do plainly threaten the peace and security of others, it appears to me as clear as the light, that interference is justifiable. If it be asked, whether anything in the personal character of a ruler can justify other nations in not treating with him, I will answer by stating a supposed case. If a nation should, in time of peace, put itself into an extraordinary state of preparation for war—if it should organize itself in such a manner as to be perpetually prepared for commencing offensive war—if that nation should embody itself under the command of a military chief of great talent and experience in the art of war—if, for fifteen years, Europe had experienced that the efforts of that nation were uniformly directed to aggression, conquest, and spoliation—if Europe had been obliged in self-defence to carry its arms into the heart of that country—if the capital of that country were taken—if the conquerors in their magnanimity and moderation offered a peace which was accepted with gratitude—if that treaty was accepted with gratitude by the individual who abdicated the throne—and yet if, after ten months, that guilty individual should be recalled by a licentious soldiery, for the purpose of fresh aggression—am I then to be told in this House, that neither we nor the other peoples of Europe have any right of interference with the internal arrangements of such a nation? How does it happen that the just and

legitimate sovereign of France has been driven from his throne? It is because his unambitious virtue made him appear to the soldiery not to be a proper instrument to wield the unsocial and unnatural energies of the French empire. If it be said that personal character has nothing to do with the question, then I ask, why was the treaty of Paris ever entered into? That treaty turned entirely on personal character, and stipulations were considered satisfactory when made with the lawful sovereign of France, that would never have been entered into with Bonaparte. If we are to take the common feeling of mankind upon this subject, we must recollect how universally the abdication of Bonaparte was hailed in this country, as an event more important than the most brilliant victories. But the question now is not merely with Bonaparte, it is with France. She has purchased the benefits of the treaty of Paris, by giving up Bonaparte, and taking her lawful sovereign, in whom Europe has confidence. If we are now to declare that we are ready to treat with Bonaparte, it will at once put an end to the coalition. If we are to tell the French people that we are ready to negotiate with Bonaparte as their ruler, it will at once destroy all the hopes that might now fairly be entertained of the co-operation of a considerable portion of that nation. When, however, we see the situation in which Bonaparte now stands; when we see him reduced to make professions contrary to his very nature; when we see the vessel in which his fortunes are embarked labouring with the storm, and its mast bowed down to the water's edge, it would be the height of impolicy and absurdity to hesitate on the course that we ought to pursue. We have now a most powerful combination of allies, not fomented by us, but acting from the moral feeling which pervades all Europe.

If we are foolish enough to throw away those means, we can never hope to recall them. Such of my friends as have talked the most about husbanding the resources of the country, have confessed that when an occasion should arrive, when some important blow might be struck against the enemy, that system should no longer be persevered in. The important crisis has come. It is vain to expect that a more favourable opportunity will ever arise. All the great powers of Europe are now with us, and a considerable portion of the population of France.

It has been said, that invading France would be the way to unite the population of that country. The fact, however, is directly the reverse. The not invading France would be the sure means of reducing the whole population under the power of the present ruler. I consider that we have, in fact, no option between peace and war. As for peace, we can have no more than a feverish, unrefreshing dream of peace, still haunted by the spectre of war. In point of finances, we would find a peace with a war establishment, an evil much greater than war itself. If we do not now go to war in conjunction with all the great powers of Europe, we shall soon be reduced to a war single-handed. If we do not now invade France, and carry on the war upon her territories, the time may arrive when our country will become the seat of war, and we shall fall unpitied and despised. If we now turn our back upon the great powers that are our allies, we shall deserve that all nations shall turn their backs upon us, when we begin to feel the consequences of our impolicy.

An address to the Regent in favour of a war policy was carried unanimously in the House of

Lords, and by a majority of 331 to 92 in the House of Commons; and in less than a month the battle of Waterloo closed the great controversy for ever.

During the years '16, '17, and '18, Plunket steadily opposed those measures of the Tory Government, of which he did not approve, and especially when the state of Ireland came under the consideration of the House in 1816, he spoke bitterly of the system of unmitigated oppression pursued by the executive in that country, and pointed out that if persisted in, it must drive the people into rebellion. His warnings were, however, little heeded by those in power.

In 1819 an occurrence took place at Manchester, which is historically known as the "Peterloo Massacre." In the furious Parliamentary battle to which this transaction gave rise, Plunket was again found fighting with Lord Grenville and against the more advanced Liberals, then led by Lord Grey. This schism in the Whig camp led to bitter recriminations, and Grenville and Plunket received unlimited abuse from their disappointed associates. A very full vindication of Plunket's personal motives and conduct on this occasion will be found in a letter written by him to Sir John Newport in January, 1821, and printed at the end of this chapter: but it is necessary that I should

recall to the reader's recollection the general outlines of the popular excitement of 1819 in England.

The defeat of Napoleon and the overthrow of the cause of revolution in France, but little affected the energies of the democratic party in England. There was a good deal of republican leaven working amongst the masses of the people, and so soon as the first flush of the great triumph at Waterloo had passed away, the Radical party resumed their agitation. In 1818 much temporary misery was caused all through the country by the new "Bank of England Act," which suddenly contracted the currency by a sum of eight millions. There were many bankruptcies and much distress amongst the lower classes. Then commenced an organized agitation; huge mobs were drilled in the manufacturing districts, where the suffering was most keenly felt. These unarmed crowds marched about the country, and were harangued by demagogues, who incited their audiences to demand many political privileges, whose meaning the poor starving wretches little understood, their real wants being employment and food.

On the 16th of August, 1819, a vast meeting of near 50,000 persons was assembled at Peterloo, and the celebrated Henry Hunt rose to address them. The neighbouring magistrates believing the assembly to be unlawful, desired the constables to

arrest the orator, but the crowds who pressed around the rostrum would not suffer their order to be carried out. The yeomanry then attempted to clear a passage through the throng, but they were surrounded and unhorsed; and the magistrates ordered the regular cavalry to charge. In the *mêlée* that ensued some half-dozen persons unfortunately lost their lives, and many more were severely injured.

The Ministry thanked the magistrates for their firmness, but the rage of the extreme Liberal party knew no bounds. Violent and riotous meetings were held all through the country, and popular excitement was worked up to so dangerous a pitch that the Government thought it expedient to reorganize some of the troops who had been disbanded at the close of the war. It is necessary to add that Lord Fitzwilliam was dismissed the lieutenancy of the West Riding for having attended one of the popular meetings at York. Such was the state of public feeling throughout the country when Parliament met in November, 1819. The speech of the Prince Regent directed attention to the seditious practices which prevailed in some of the manufacturing districts, to conduct thereby produced incompatible with the public tranquillity, and to the spirit then fully manifested of hostility to the

Constitution. Parliament was advised to take immediate measures to counteract a system that, if not checked, would bring confusion and ruin on the nation. The speech, after declaring that an addition had been made to the military force, and after alluding to the depression which still continued in certain branches of manufactures, concluded in the following words :—

Upon the loyalty of the great body of the people I have the most confident reliance, but it will require your utmost vigilance and exertion collectively and individually to check the dissemination of these doctrines of treason and impiety, and to impress upon the minds of all classes of his Majesty's subjects, that it is from the cultivation of the principles of religion and from a just subordination to lawful authority, that we can alone expect the continuance of that divine favour and protection which have hitherto been so signally experienced in this kingdom.

An address having been moved, which was an echo of the speech from the Throne, an amendment was proposed by the Opposition to be added at the end of the address. This amendment, after reprobating the attempts to persuade the suffering classes to seek relief for their distress in schemes injurious to themselves, dangerous to the public quiet and subversive of the Constitution, declared that while Parliament would uphold the laws and the Constitution, they ought to take measures

to satisfy the people that their complaints would be considered and their rights protected; that this was necessary to preserve that public confidence in the institutions of the country which was their best support. The amendment ended by referring in the following terms to the proceedings which had taken place at Manchester :—

> That we have seen with deep regret the events which took place at Manchester on the 16th of August; and without pronouncing any opinion on the circumstances which occurred on that melancholy occasion, that we feel it demands our most serious attention and deliberate inquiry, in order to dispel all those feelings to which it has given birth, and to show that the measures then resorted to were the result of urgent and unavoidable necessity—that they were justified by the Constitution, and that the lives of his Majesty's subjects cannot be sacrificed with impunity.

In support of the amendment it was declared by the Opposition that they deplored the dissemination of seditious and blasphemous doctrines which had undoubtedly taken place, but they were convinced that the extent of the mischief was greatly exaggerated, and that a nation more pious and devoted to its duty to God than the English nation did not exist. They admitted that great and general political dissatisfaction prevailed, but declared that this was the necessary consequence of the intensity of distress which afflicted the

country, a distress which the Government had done nothing to remove. The nation was overtaxed—and this was the root of the evil. The envious condition to which the policy of the Ministers and the Parliament had reduced the country, had opened the eyes of the nation to the necessity of Parliamentary Reform. Even those most opposed to all visionary schemes of change had lost their confidence in the House of Commons as at present constituted, and were now convinced that there was something wrong in the state of the representation. It was not by fresh troops, by laws of severity and coercion, or by loyal addresses that the awakened spirit of the people could be put down, or their grievances redressed.

They expressed their astonishment that no notice had been taken in the speech from the throne of the events which had happened at Manchester. No occurrence equal to it in importance had taken place for years. No occurrence had for years called forth so general a feeling of astonishment. Addresses were pouring in from all parts of the kingdom calling for inquiry.

The present question was one which could not be investigated in the courts of law, so well as in Parliament: as yet no proceeding had been instituted in the courts, having any relation to the point in question, viz.: as to the mode of exe-

cuting the warrant and of dispersing the mutiny. It was said that indictments might be instituted against the yeomanry; but their conviction or acquittal would not decide the question as to the propriety or impropriety of the conduct of the magistrates.

Precedents were alluded to when Parliament had directed inquiry in cases similar to the present. These precedents will be found all stated and replied to in the speech of Mr. Plunket. The dismissal of Lord Fitzwilliam from the lieutenancy of the West Riding was repeatedly referred to, and it was asked of what crime had this distinguished nobleman been guilty to warrant a proceeding of such extraordinary severity. Such were the principal topics insisted upon by Mr. Tierney and Sir James Mackintosh in supporting the amendment. When at the conclusion of the speech of the latter, Mr. Plunket addressed the House, the debate was going hard against the Ministry; but his speech in their defence went to the bottom of the constitutional question and reads rather like the calm opinion of some great jurist advising the Parliament, than like the pleading of an advocate.

Mr. Plunket commenced by observing that the question before the House had not been very fairly treated. Much had been introduced which did not necessarily connect itself with the subject, and which had a tendency to divert the attention of the House from the deeply important matters which pressed for their con-

sideration. Mr. Plunket continued: There has been some address in making the case of Lord Fitzwilliam so principal a topic. As a ground of argument applicable to the present question, it cannot be justly resorted to by any person who does not go the length of asserting that the dismissal of that nobleman would warrant Parliament in the refusal to consider, or to make provision against, the dangers with which the country is threatened, and which are announced in the speech from the throne. No person, on any side of the House, has laid down so extreme a position; on the contrary, the amendment of my right honourable friend admits the danger and the necessity of meeting it by suitable provisions. I shall, therefore, in my view of the subject, relieve myself from a discussion which I could not approach without feelings of great embarrassment. My habitual reverence for that distinguished nobleman is such that I could scarcely hope to bring my mind, fairly and impartially, to any investigation which affects him. I consider his character as uniting everything noble and generous in freedom, with everything that can exalt or dignify the aristocracy of the country; and I therefore take leave to dismiss this subject as one not connected with the debate, and in doing so, I feel much satisfaction in the statement of the noble lord (Castlereagh), that the dismissal of Earl Fitzwilliam was founded, not on any personal imputations, but on a difference of opinion with his Majesty's Government on points involving the exercise of his duties as lord lieutenant of the West Riding.

Again, I think the subject has, in another respect, not been very fairly treated by my right honourable friend who immediately preceded me. It is stated in the Speech from the Throne that a revolutionary spirit is at work in the country, which threatens its safety and

its existence; and the truth of this statement is not denied, but indeed admitted, by the amendment. Is it then perfectly fair to call the attention of the House from the consideration of the public danger and its remedies —from the machinations and arts of those who are preparing measures for the subversion of the state and the overthrow of every constituted authority—to the plans and objects of that portion of the peaceful and loyal subjects of this country who respect the law and constitution, and are desirous of improving them. This latter description of persons were entitled to the most attentive and respectful consideration. However I may differ from them on the subject of Parliamentary reform, I consider their objects to be honest, and their means of effecting them to be constitutional. Whenever, at any proper time, and in any proper form, their claims shall be brought before Parliament, they will be listened to with attention and with respect. Their proposals, if reasonable, will be yielded to; if not so, they will be met with fair argument and calm discussion; and the result, in either event, will be satisfactory and conciliating. The people of England are a reasoning and reasonable people; but is it fair, either to them or to the country, to confound their cause and their objects with the persons whom we now are called upon to deal with, whose undisguised aim is to pull down the entire fabric of our constitution and to effect a revolution by force? Against this immediate and overwhelming danger it is the first duty of Parliament to provide. And to turn aside from this urgent and paramount duty to the discussion of subjects of inferior importance and of distinct consideration, would be an abandonment of the interests of the country. When I see a revolutionary project ripe for execution—when I see that sedition and blasphemy are

the instruments by which it works, and that open force is to be employed for its accomplishment, I feel it to be trifling with the duties of the House, and with the safety of the country, to turn their minds to any other object until the terrors that hang over our existing establishments are first dispelled.

No person, I am happy to see, denies the existence of these dangers; but I think there is some tendency to underrate their extent, and to undervalue their consequence. It is said that the public mind in general is sound: I trust and firmly believe it is so. I am convinced that the strength and spirit of the loyal subjects are sufficient to put down the enemies of law and of order; I therefore am apprehensive, not of revolution, but of the attempt at revolution, which I believe in my conscience will be made, if not prevented by the vigilance and energy of Parliament; and what I contemplate with the deepest alarm are the miseries which such an attempt, in its progress to certain and necessary failure, must produce. If this mischief shall once burst forth, I anticipate a series of horrors which must shake the safety and happiness of the country to its foundations. The very circumstances which ensure the ultimate failure of the enterprise aggravate its dangers. Revolution, always calamitous, yet, when pursued for some definite purpose, conducted by abilities, tempered by the admixture of rank and of property, may be effected, as it has been before in this country, without any incurable shock being given to the safety of persons or of property. But here is a revolution to be achieved by letting loose the physical force of the community against its constituted authorities—a revolution for the sake of revolution, to take away the property of the rich, and to distribute it among the rabble, a rabble previously debauched by the

unremitting dissemination of blasphemous libels, and freed from the restraints of moral or religious feeling. On this subject I feel sufficient confidence to express my opinion, without waiting for any of those documents which the noble lord proposes to lay before the House.

These are facts of public notoriety, known and seen by every man who does not choose to shut his eyes. Have not meetings been proposed for the purpose of assuming the functions which belong only to the sovereign power of the state — meetings which, if they actually had been held, would have been acts of high treason. When it was found that matters were not sufficiently ripe for this undisguised act of public rebellion, had not the same masses of the populace been again convened, under the directions of the same leaders, under the pretexts of seeking universal suffrage and annual parliaments,—their very pretexts such as the constitution could not survive, if they were effectuated; but their real object being to overawe the constituted authorities by the display of their numerical strength, and to prepare for direct, immediate, forcible revolution? Have we not seen the same itinerant mountebank who set their powers in motion publicly assisting at the orgies of the blasphemous wretch lately convicted; and can we doubt that treason is the object, and that blasphemy and sedition are the means? When I see these fiends in human shape endeavouring to rob their unhappy victims of all their consolations here, and of all their hopes hereafter; when I see them with their levers placed under the great pillars of social order, and heaving the constitution from its foundation, I am rejoiced to see Parliament assembled. Our first duty is to convince these enemies of God and man that within the walls of Parliament they can find no countenance; and through the organ of

Parliament to let them know that nothing awaits them but indignant resistance from the great body of the people.

We are bound to assure the Throne of our loyal and cheerful co-operation for these purposes; and on this ground alone the amendment is objectionable, even if the measure suggested by it were in itself desirable, inasmuch as by tacking it to the address, and not proposing it as a separate resolution, it declares the measure of inquiry so essential as to preclude all exertions for the safety of the state until that inquiry shall be disposed of. But, waiving this objection, I shall proceed to consider it on its own merits. It is said then that the dispersion of the meeting at Manchester on the 16th of August calls for parliamentary inquiry; and here I beg leave to remind the House that parliamentary inquiry, though certainly a proceeding recognized by our constitution, is still not the ordinary mode for investigating either the conduct of magistrates in the execution of the laws, or the conduct of those who are the objects of the execution of those laws. A case, therefore, for inquiry is to be made out by those who call for it. What, then, is the inquiry proposed? Is it into the conduct of Government for thanking the magistrates? Such a proceeding, I own, appears to me most premature and uncalled for. If the magistrates had issued orders for dispersing the king's subjects peacefully and legally assembled; if, in consequence of such orders, the blood of innocent and unoffending persons had been shed, the conduct of Ministers in advising his Royal Highness the Prince Regent to thank them for such acts would call for inquiry and for censure. If, on the contrary, bodies to the amount of twenty thousand or seventy thousand, I care not which—but to an amount beyond the means of the civil power to deal

with—have marched in regular columns and in military array, with seditious banners, into the heart of one of the most populous and most inflammable towns in the empire; if these men had been previously drilled to military exercises; if they had been shortly before convened for a treasonable purpose; if they resisted the authority of the peace officers executing the warrant of the magistrates; if, in short, the case stated by the noble lord and by the honourable member for Dover is correct, then I have no hesitation in saying that his Majesty's Ministers were not only justified in returning thanks to the magistrates, but that it was their bounden duty to do so; and that those gentlemen, acting in the discharge of a most important duty, in a crisis of public peril, and undertaking an awful responsibility for the public service, were entitled to have the sense of the executive Government on their conduct. When it is said that this is prejudging the question, it seems to be taken as granted that the executive power of the country is not in any degree lodged in the Government. Would it not have been their duty to have given previous advice and instruction to the magistrates on such a subject and with a view to such an emergency? When they direct the public prosecutor to proceed against any individual, can that be considered as a prejudging of the question? To this extent it is the exercise of their proper functions, which they cannot neglect without an abandonment of duty; and if they felt, under all the circumstances, that the conduct of those most meritorious public servants deserved their praise, it would have been unjust and mean to have withheld their expressions of it. How, then, can the propriety of the letter of thanks be judged until the facts shall be ascertained? True, it is said, and therefore inquire. Certainly; but how? Clearly

by the regular course of law, and by the regular tribunals of the country, unless some case be previously established, showing that these tribunals are inadequate or unsuited for the purpose. Bills have been found against several of the persons alleged to be actors in this seditious meeting: on these trials the legality of the meeting will be necessarily the subject of investigation. And why is it that these trials have not taken place, and the public mind has not, through the regular constitutional channel of a trial by jury, been informed of the real nature of these transactions? Why, because the persons so accused have availed themselves of the delay which the law unfortunately allows, and have postponed their trials until the spring assizes.

But, it is said, that although the legality of the meeting might be decided on in those cases, still the conduct of the magistrates in dispersing it might be illegal; and this would not necessarily, in them, come under discussion. Why, then, are not proceedings taken on the part of the persons alleged to be aggrieved or injured by the acts of the magistrates? The honourable and learned member made the absence of such proceedings a ground for parliamentary inquiry; but is not the fair inference from the absence of such proceedings this, that no reasonable foundation for them exists? But the grand jury have thrown out the bills preferred on behalf of these persons. Is this a ground for parliamentary inquiry? Is it to be presumed that the grand jury of the county of Lancaster have violated their oaths? An artifice has been resorted to, for the purpose of rendering the administration of justice suspected in the public mind, by publishing the informations which had been sent up to the grand jury; but every gentleman must be aware of the difference between an information in

which the party states the facts according to his own views, and a *vivâ voce* examination before the grand jury, in which the entire truth is extracted from the witness. But, supposing the grand jury had erred in ignoring the bills, fresh indictments might be sent up to any succeeding grand jury. Is the entire county of Lancashire to be pronounced unable or unwilling to exercise such functions? But the magistrates refused to receive informations. Is not their conduct examinable in the Court of King's Bench; and may not all the facts connected with such a transaction be fully examined on affidavits? And if any doubt existed for a jury, on an information under the sanction of the Court, is the Court of King's Bench also to be included within the ban of this proscription of all the constituted authorities? But the honourable and learned member says that the Court of King's Bench would not interfere unless the magistrate acted wilfully, and that he might commit an error which would not subject him to punishment. Is this, then, a ground for parliamentary interference, to stop the course of law, and subject the public functionary to an extraordinary visitation of public vengeance? Are the different points of the argument of the honourable and learned member altogether reconcileable? When his object is to make out a case so important as to call for parliamentary inquiry, he states the conduct of the magistrates as a daring violation of the subject's privileges, a triumph of authority over law, a foul stain upon our laws, forming a black era in the annals of our country; but when it becomes an object to show that there may be a case in which the courts of law would be incompetent to investigate the truth, then this foul deed, this portentous violation of the laws and of the constitution dwindles into an error in judgment too slight and too

pardonable to warrant the interference of the Court of King's Bench.

Is such an error, if it does exist, I would ask, a case for parliamentary inquiry? Is this the way in which the conduct of magistrates is to be examined by Parliament? I own I am not one of those who are disposed to examine too critically the conduct of magistrates acting in perilous times, under heavy responsibility; and sure I am, that if the benignant principle of the law shield their errors, it is not the province of Parliament to deprive them of that protection. Further, I will ask, if any individual be aggrieved, where is the bar to his remedy by civil action, in which the whole merits of the case would be discussed in a court of law, and decided on by a jury of his country? What pretence is there for saying that justice has been denied, or even delayed? Unless the House is prepared to bring to its bar the grand jury of Lancashire; unless they are prepared to say that the whole body of public functionaries, petty juries, grand juries, magistrates, and judges, are linked in one common conspiracy against the peaceable petitioners who assembled at Manchester on the 16th of August, they have not ground or principle on which they can order this inquiry. I deprecate such a proceeding as calculated to give efficacy to the plans of the revolutionary party for the degradation of the public functionaries, and to stamp with the authoritative seal of Parliament what hitherto has rested on vulgar calumny and on popular clamour. I believe that such an inquiry, instead of being calculated, as is alleged, to allay dissatisfaction, and to conciliate the public mind, can have no other effect than to raise the hopes and spirits of revolutionists, and to strike damp and panic into the heart of every loyal subject. Besides this, the course is wild and impracticable. How

is this inquiry to be conducted? At the bar of the House or in a committee? Is this inquiry to supersede the proceedings already instituted in the King's courts? Or are the two classes of proceeding to be carried on simultaneously? If the former is to be the course, the laws are to be robbed of their authority, and the subject of his redress, by a proceeding utterly unsuited to the purposes either of punishment or of compensation. If the latter, we are to have the anomalous and unprecedented spectacle of persons being tried on charges affecting their persons and properties, perhaps their lives, in proceedings before juries and with witnesses on oath, in the regular courts of law; while the very same facts are undergoing a discussion without oath, before the extraordinary tribunal of Parliament. Is it possible that either public or individual justice can be obtained by such a course, or that any result can be derived from it calculated to maintain the authority of the laws or the dignity of Parliament? Such a proceeding, I must say, appears to me wild, unprecedented, and impracticable.

My honourable and learned friend has adverted to three cases as precedents to warrant such a course as that now recommended: the first is a case in the year 1714, in which the House of Lords, for the purpose of procuring the removal of magistrates who were supposed to entertain Jacobite principles, had addressed the Throne for a list of the magistrates, and entered into a strict inquiry; in consequence of which several of those magistrates were dismissed. Was there any trial then pending in a court of law? Was there any specific fact that could be inquired into in a court of law? Or was it anything more than a proceeding to enable Parliament to advise the Crown with respect to

the wholesome exercise of its prerogative? The second is the case of the murder of Porteous by the mob of Edinburgh (which has lately derived much celebrity from a popular work). Was that a proceeding affecting any trial pending, or with a view to any individual punishment? It was, as fairly stated by the honourable and learned member, an inquiry in order to ground a bill of pains and penalties against the town of Edinburgh, and which was accordingly passed. The third instance alluded to is the inquiry instituted before the secret committee in 1794: that was an inquiry for the purpose of grounding measures for the public safety; and was with reference to the general state of the country, not in the conduct of local magistrates, and on a particular occasion. Again, the danger of its incidentally affecting the rights of individuals, who were liable to be tried in the courts of law, was so strongly felt that the inquiry was a secret one. When published, the names of individuals were suppressed; and even under all these circumstances, the possibility of an impression unfavourable to these individuals having been made by the report was so strongly felt, that Mr. Erskine relied on it, and successfully, and in some instances, as I believe, acquittals were obtained on that ground. When my honourable and learned friend, with his extensive knowledge and research, can produce no other instances than these, I feel myself justified in repeating the assertion, that the measure is unprecedented. But there is a case not alluded to by my honourable and learned friend, as I recollect, about the year 1715, in which a parliamentary inquiry having been directed into the nature of a certain meeting at Oxford, which was alleged to be riotous, a number of affidavits were produced on one side, and after an unavailing demand of examination on the

other, the inquiry was found so impracticable that it was dropped, and no further proceeding founded on it.*

'The case for inquiry, I therefore contend, is unsupported by precedent, and is not bottomed on any ascer-

* The reference appears to have been made from memory, and though substantially true, was certainly inaccurate in expression. The facts were these :—A tumult having arisen at Oxford on the Prince's birthday, and the loyalty of the Mayor and of the heads of the University being called in question, the Lords of the Council examined into the case on affidavits, not with reference to the riot, but with respect to their conduct as to rejoicing on the Prince's birthday—a matter which could not be the subject of any legal inquiry. The Council came to the following resolution :—Resolved, that the heads of the University and Mayor of the city neglected to make any public rejoicing on the Prince's birthday; but some of the collegiates, with the officers, being met to celebrate the day, the house where they were was assaulted, and the windows were broken by the rabble, which was the beginning and occasion of the riots that ensued as well from the soldiers as the scholars and the townsmen, and the conduct of the Mayor seems well justified by the affidavits on his part.

On the 25th of March, 1717, the Lords addressed the Crown, that the proper officer should lay before the House the complaints and depositions relative to the riots and disorders complained of at the city of Oxford, and the proceedings which had been had thereon. In consequence of this address, the documents, consisting among others of fifty-six affidavits by the officers and soldiers, and fifty-five affidavits on the part of the Mayor and city, were laid before the House of Lords, and referred to a committee of the whole House. On the 3rd April, 1717, the committee repealed two resolutions, viz., an approbation of the resolutions of the Lords of the Council already stated; and, secondly, that the publication of depositions, while the matter was depending in council, was disrespectful to the Prince and tending to sedition. A petition against this resolution was offered on behalf of the Vice-chancellor, the Mayor, and magistrates, who desired to be heard in reply. Their application was refused, and the resolutions already stated were adopted by the House, and no further proceedings were taken; and even from this mere adoption of the resolution in council twenty-eight peers dissented, assigning this among other reasons: namely, that the matters of fact were not sufficiently inquired into, from want of opportunity of replying to the affidavits; and because by such proceedings the magistrates may be discouraged from doing their duty on such occasions. These facts appear on the journals of the Lords, and it is conceived they substantially warrant the statement of this case as one tending to show the futility of such inquiries, although they do not confirm the exact words of the statement.

tained fact, or even on any statement made by any member in his place of any case which, if true, would warrant its adoption: indeed, I have not heard any member assert the legality of the Manchester meeting. I am confident that no man acquainted with the laws and constitution of the country would venture to do so. The House will excuse me if I trespass a little further on their patience, by stating my opinion as to these public meetings. The right of the people of this country to meet for the purpose of expressing their opinions on any subject connected with their own individual interests, or with the public welfare, is beyond all question; it is a sacred privilege belonging to the most humble as fully as to the highest subject in the community: they have a right to the full expression and to the free communication of such sentiments; to interchange them with their fellow-subjects, to animate and catch fire each from the other. I trust that to such rights I shall never be found an enemy; but I must say that these rights, like all others, to be exercised in civil society must be subject to such modification and restriction as to render them compatible with other rights equally acknowledged and equally sacred. Every subject of this realm has an undoubted right to the protection of the laws—to the security of his person and his property—and still more, to the full assurance of such safety. And I have no hesitation in asserting that any assembly of the people, held under such circumstances as to excite in the minds of the king's peaceable and loyal subjects reasonable grounds of alarm, in this respect is an illegal assembly, and liable to be dispersed as such. I think it important that it should be understood that these rights are restricted not merely to this extent—namely, that they must not assemble for an

illegal purpose; that they must not assemble with force and arms; and they must not use seditious language; that they must not revile the laws or public functionaries; but beyond all this, that they must not assemble under such circumstances, whether of numbers or otherwise, as to excite well-grounded terror in the minds of their fellow-subjects, or to disturb their tranquil and assured enjoyment of the protection of the laws, free from all reasonable apprehension of force or violence. A vulgar notion may have prevailed, that if the avowed and immediate purpose of such meetings is not illegal, or if they have not arms in their hands, or if no force be actually used or immediately threatened, the assembly is legal: no opinion can be more unfounded, and I do not fear contradiction from any constitutional lawyer when I assert that any assembly of the people, whether armed or unarmed; whether using or threatening to use force, or not doing so; and whether the avowed object be illegal or legal; if held in such numbers, or with such language, or emblems, or deportment as to create well-grounded terror in the king's liege subjects for their lives, their persons, or their property, is an illegal assembly, and may be dispersed as such. Such has been the law as laid down by the ablest of our lawyers and of our judges, from the earliest period of our jurisprudence, and in the best times of our history and Constitution, before the Revolution and since the Revolution, independent of the Riot Act or of any statutable enactment, by the principles of our common law, which was always founded on the principles of common sense. The application of this principle to each particular case must always be a matter of discretion, but in cases like the present it cannot admit of doubt or difficulty. When meetings become too strong for the civil power to deal

with them, the laws must prohibit them; if not, recourse must be had to military force. When the citizen becomes too strong for the law, the magistrate of necessity becomes a soldier; and those who justify these unrestricted meetings are the worst enemies to the liberties of their country, and lay the foundation of military despotism. If bodies of the people, not convened by any public functionary, but called together by mountebanks whose only title is their impudence and folly, are entitled to assemble, not in thousands but in tens of thousands; to march with banners displayed in military array, into the hearts of populous cities; and if the laws are not competent to assure the people of this country against the panic and dismay excited by such proceedings, there is an end to the constitution. I implore the House to protect the country from the effect of these desolating plans which are now in operation. Even though they should not break out in actual rebellion, their mischiefs are beyond calculation. The principles of respect for the laws and orders of the State, the reverence that is due to the sacred obligations of religion, these are not the results of momentary feelings which may be thrown aside and resumed at pleasure; they are habits which, if once removed, cannot easily be restored. If those sacred sources, from which are the issues of public happiness and virtue, be once tainted, how is their purity to be restored? I have reason to believe that the blasphemies which have excited the horror of all good men have been fashioned by these miscreants into primers for the education of children, that these helpless beings in receiving the first elements of knowledge may be inoculated with this pestilence. I again implore the House to act with decision and energy while yet it is in their power. If the great foundations of public safety are

once shaken, the united exertion of all the honest men of every party may come too late. On these grounds I deprecate the amendment, as calculated to give encouragement to the worst enemies of the State; and cordially concur in the original address.

The question having been put, that the words proposed by Mr. Tierney be added to the said address, the House divided,—

Ayes	150
Noes	381

The main question was then put and agreed to.*

During the remainder of the session the Government continued to receive the valuable aid of Lord Grenville and Mr. Plunket in carrying

* This oration elicited high praise from the literary critics of the day. The *Quarterly Review* (whose writers felt, of course, very gratefully to him at the moment) thus described his style:—"Mr. Plunket, whatever be the reason, seems to have escaped even a tinge of these [Irish] peculiarities. In his style of speaking he is, as was said of Charles Fox, '*all over English*,' if indeed he be not something better. He is simple, nervous, collected, deliberative, consecutive, and this without at all degenerating into tameness. If he has not altogether those impassioned bursts, or that overwhelming and inspiring vehemence for which the great departed orator just named was so remarkable, he has like him all the unpretending plainness which belongs to the perfect style of eloquence."—*Quarterly Review*, vol. xxii. p. 497. January, 1820. Lord Dudley and Ward, writing to his friend the Bishop of Llandaff, in December, 1819, complains of the insufficiency of the Parliamentary reports, and adds,—"By-the-by, he (Plunket) has cut a great figure this year; his speech, in answer to Mackintosh, was among the most perfect replies I ever heard. He assailed the fabric of his adversary, not by an irregular damaging fire that left parts of it standing, but by a complete, rapid, systematic process of demolition, that did not leave one stone standing upon another."—*Lord Dudley's Letters to the Bishop of Llandaff*, p. 232.

through the various measures which it was found necessary to introduce, in order to quell the disturbances and counteract the revolutionary tendencies prevalent amongst the people. To explain the spirit by which Mr. Plunket was actuated in this conduct, I will quote a short passage from his speech in support of the Seditious Meetings Prevention Bill (Dec. 13, 1819).

His support was not founded on any suggestions of temporary policy, nor on the information which was disclosed in the papers before the House, but was given with the conviction that the proposed measures did not infringe on the constitution, while they were essential to its conservation. The state of society in this country, every man who reflected on the subject must admit, had within the last twenty or thirty years undergone a greater change than from the period of the Conquest until the time of which he spoke. Within that interval the public attention had been called to the consideration of every measure connected with the administration of the Government, in a degree hitherto unprecedented. There had been an intensity of light shed upon all subjects, civil, political, and religious; so that measures were now scanned with minuteness, which were scarcely looked into, or at most, but generally known before. Did he complain of that change, or of the means by which it had been produced? No; he rejoiced at it. The freedom of the public press, directing its efforts under the system of the Constitution, was the most effectual security of public freedom. He was persuaded that where every action of every man connected with public affairs was laid before the public in the fullest manner, and most strictly canvassed and

examined—where the press exercised this kind of guardianship we had the best guarantee of all our rights. Then why did he allude to the public press? Because there was under the same title another description, a blasphemous, seditious, mischievous press, of which the members of that House knew but little, but which had been unremittingly at work in destroying every honest and good feeling in the heart of man, and in loosening all those moral and social ties without which civilization could not exist. It was not against the respectable press, but against this under-current, which, setting with great force, was drifting the mass of the humbler classes of the community into sedition, atheism, and revolution, that the House sought to guard. It was for the consummation of such atrocious objects that this battery was brought to play upon their passions and their ignorance. Did he mean to say that the lower class of the people had no right to be informed on public transactions? Did he mean to say that the lower orders of the people had not a right to inquire into and discuss subjects of a political nature? No such thing. Did he mean to say that they ought not to have the power of expressing their sense of any grievance under which they might think themselves to suffer? Far from it; but while he was willing to allow to them the enjoyment of every constitutional privilege which they were entitled to possess, he never could consider that nice discussions on the very frame of the Constitution—on the most essential changes in the institutions and fundamental laws of the country, were calculated for minds of such intelligence and cultivation. They ought rather to be protected from the mischiefs which such a misapplication of their minds must entail. Every capacity was capable of understanding the nature and the extent of

the restrictions which Government, for the support of its institution, necessarily imposed on the natural freedom of man; but to the task of contemplating the more than usurious repayment which in long and various succession was received for that surrender, the generality of persons were not quite so adequate. The penalties of Government stood at the threshold, but its benefits were to be traced through a long interval of ages—in the distribution of equal laws—in the control of public wisdom, producing, even through apparent contradiction, the grand harmony of the social system; these he conceived were subjects which could not be well discussed by men whose time was chiefly devoted to daily labour. It had been wisely said that "a little learning was a dangerous thing." It was true in literature, in religion, in politics. In literature, superficial reading too frequently formed the babbling critic. In religion, the poor man, who, unsettled as to his faith, became curious upon his evidences, and who, if he possessed the capacity and had time and means to extend his inquiries, would in the end reach the moral demonstration which religion unfolded—shaken, but not instructed, became a shallow infidel. It was equally so in politics; men who indulged in the perusal of every species of invective against the institutions of their country, who read on their shopboard of all the evils, and did not comprehend the blessings of the system of government under which they lived, these men, the nature of whose employment and whose education disallowed them to be statesmen, might, however, learn enough to become turbulent and discontented subjects. Was not this the case in France, where persons were called from their daily labour to give opinions upon the most difficult points of legislation?

Throughout all these exciting debates, the most dangerous antagonist with whom Plunket had to deal was Mr. Henry Brougham. And although parliamentary reports now give us but a faint idea of those tremendous encounters, we still seem to hear the echo of the weighty blows dealt on either side. It is scarcely necessary to add that these conflicts in the senate never led to the smallest coldness between the combatants outside its walls. One of them has generously and eloquently recorded his sense of unshaken friendship; and I can safely say that, until his latest moments, the other, in recalling these famous intellectual battles, preserved only feelings of affection and admiration for the great competitor with whom he was proud to have been matched.

But many other members of the Liberal party opposed to the Government at that time felt an individual as well as a political rancour against Lord Grenville and his followers, who had, as they thought, deserted from their ranks at a time when, if they had continued to act in concert with former friends, the overthrow of the Government seemed possible. A report was spread, probably by one of these persons, that Lord Grey had expressed himself very severely upon Plunket's conduct, and had used with reference to him the bitter reproach that "he had acted with more than the zeal of an

apostate." This rumour was afterwards conveyed to Mr. Plunket by an officious acquaintance, and caused him to write the following indignant letter to his friend, Sir John Newport, in which he not only vindicates his conduct in the instance in question, but reviews his political career from its commencement up to the time at which the letter was written. The transaction led to no ultimate breach between Lord Grey and Mr. Plunket, but at the moment the latter was evidently much exasperated.

[Private.] "*Old Connaught,*

"MY DEAR SIR JOHN, *January 9th*, 1821.

"I have this moment received your letter of the 1st, and grieve to find from it that you have been so severely visited by your old enemy, the asthma. An active parliamentary campaign in such a season (moral and physical) is not a good cure, but your constitution is not like that of any other man I know, and I have observed you to get health and spirits from unceasing exertions. I hope most sincerely to learn that your labours are not injurious to yourself: of their being of much service to the public, highly as I estimate them both in value and motive, I own I am not sanguine. Without going into the question of the Queen's guilt or innocence (which, as a subject of direct parliamentary discussion, I consider as finally disposed of) it appears to me that great blame attaches to almost the entire course of proceeding on it, as well abroad as at home; and perhaps also to the originating such a proceeding on such grounds. That Ministers have shaken themselves in

public confidence (and especially in the opinion of the sober and intelligent portion of the community, which I consider as truly and substantially constituting the people of England,) appears to me, with such means as I have of forming a judgment, very manifest; if common prudence were allowed to be taken into consideration by their opponents, I think there would be little doubt of their being displaced, and even as it is, the chances appear to me rather against them; but if they are doing much to put themselves down there seems to be a noble emulation kindled in the minds of their adversaries to keep them up. Is it true that the British public are divided into two classes: the enjoyers or expectants of the Crown's patronage on the one hand, and the enemies of the Crown and of the State on the other? I mean not those merely whose direct object it is to pull down both; but those who in pursuit of their object or under the influence of their passions, would not scruple to endanger them. That there is a portion of Honesty and Firmness which might steer the country through its difficulties I fully believe, but will it or can it be brought into action? My expectations, I confess, grow every day more faint. The folly and fury which have been displayed in various quarters, high and low, may subside or be forgotten, but ought they who in any change would naturally be looked to by the country, and who independently of any change ought to give wholesome direction to the public sentiment—ought they, I say, to make themselves parties to such proceeding? When Lord Grey thinks it right and wise to attend at a Durham meeting, and in addition to many other indiscretions, chooses to raise up with the present questions one which has no connection with them, I mean the Manchester business, on which he has been already out-voted by an overwhelming

majority in Parliament—of which majority many of the wisest and honestest men in England, some of them his own staunch friends and general supporters, formed a part,—when he goes out of his way to misrepresent (so grossly that he could not impose on himself) Lord Grenville's speech on the Queen's business in the House of Lords, and this for the purpose of founding on the misrepresentation an unwarrantable personal attack, classing him with the advocates of constructive and cumulative treasons in the worst times; is all this very encouraging as to our prospects of much good growing out of the present state of things? When he praises the admirable speech of his eloquent relative, in which that wise and eloquent gentleman had congratulated his friends on the prospect of becoming free from ecclesiastical tryanny, and had complimented the Spanish people on their having confiscated the property of the Church,—is not all this, my dear Sir John, most disabling to the individual as a person to be placed at the head of public affairs? is it not most alarming to all men who, though they see much to condemn, and are willing to act disinterestedly and strenuously upon their sober and just views, yet look with terror to wild reform and public tumult, and is it not most unjust and unwarrantable in any person who considers himself as a leader of a party, to involve them in all the consequences which attach to such monstrous follies? You see, my dear sir, that I write to you without reserve, and I will now ask you, under such circumstances and in such times, am I called on, at the sacrifice of private ease and of professional pursuits, and of the duties which I owe to my family, to attend the meeting of Parliament, at which I clearly foresee I should be obliged to pursue a course disagreeable to all parties? My nature is not such as to admit of

my taking an indecisive part when I at all interfere. Feeling strongly, I should express without reserve what I feel. I know by some experience the intolerant construction to which such conduct would expose me, and I am quite certain that I should have the mortification of returning to this country with the hostility of both parties, without having reason to console myself by the conviction of having effected or contributed to any public good.

You have brought on yourself a long and tiresome homily; but as we are on this subject I must try your patience somewhat more, and on a subject personal to myself. Last Saturday an intimate friend of mine called on me in Dublin, and asked me, had I lately heard anything in particular with respect to Lord Grey? No. He then said that a person whom he named, a particular friend of mine, had told him that Lord Grey, in a letter lately written to some person in this country, had stated that I, in the Manchester business, had conducted myself with "more than the zeal of an apostate."

I leave you to imagine what I felt. I waited on my friend, who confirmed the fact, but refused to name the person who had informed him, alleging (in my opinion inconsistently with his having communicated the story,) that he could not do so without a breach of private confidence. On reflection I am as well pleased that the fact was not communicated to me so as to warrant my personally adressing his lordship on the subject; under irritated feelings I might, perhaps, have remonstrated too hotly (too strongly I could not), on what I cannot, on consideration, suppose to have been intended as a personal insult; but it is impossible for me to disbelieve the fact that such an expression has been used, and equally so for me to rest under it, or to restrain my

expression of the strong indignation with which I repel a charge so wanton and so unfounded. Without commenting on the offensiveness of the term, but merely adverting to the substance of the charge, I must entreat your patience while I state or call to your recollection some facts from which it may be judged how far Earl Grey is entitled to censure my conduct on the occasion alluded to, either as inconsistent with any principles which I had ever avowed or acted on, or as departing from any party or person with whom I had ever connected myself. For this purpose I must call your attention a little beyond the transaction alluded to.

In the Irish Parliament, of which I first became a member in the year 1797 (I think it was), I had the honour of sitting for the borough of Charlemont, on the recommendation of the late Earl of Charlemont, perfectly unfettered, but with the happiness of knowing that on all leading points there was an entire and cordial union of opinions between that most excellent person and myself. The party to which Lord Howick was attached had about that time seceded from Parliament, both in England and Ireland; a measure which, so far as regarded Ireland, Lord Charlemont entirely condemned. I continued to act in opposition to the Irish Government of that day, publicly condemning many, indeed, most of their measures; but at the same time, both as a soldier and as a member of Parliament, marking in the most decided manner my hostility to the revolutionary party, which at first threatened, and at length actually broke out into, rebellion against the State. I have no doubt that the party to which Lord Howick was attached entertained sentiments as much opposed to the wild projects of the revolutionists as I did; I only mean to say that they were then in secession from Parliament,

and that in my public conduct I had no reference to them; in fact, I was totally unconnected with them. Then came the measure of Union, which we all opposed; but in which opposition, save as to the single measure, no sort of political alliance ever was formed or thought of. In the year 1803, in Mr. Addington's administration, and while Lord Hardwicke was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, it was proposed to me to become Solicitor-General. I accepted the office, being told that it was considered by them as merely a legal office, totally unconnected with any political principle or engagement, but offered, as they were pleased to say, with reference to my fitness and situation at the Bar. This office I held till 1806, when, on the office of Attorney-General becoming vacant, I was promoted to it, Mr. Pitt being then Prime Minister. On his death in that year, the administration of which Lord Grenville and Lord Grey were the leading members, was formed; and so far was Lord Grey from considering me at that time as having any connection with or claim on him as the leader of a party, that the first movement of his administration in this country was to propose to dismiss me from office, in order to make room for Mr. Curran, who was the political associate of himself and of his friends in this country. All this you perfectly know, as also the causes which made it impracticable to appoint Mr. Curran, and that my continuance in office was merely in consequence of that impracticability. Some time in 1807 Lord Grenville expressed his opinion that the Attorney-General of Ireland ought to be a member of the British Parliament, and he directed Mr. Wickham to apply to me. I at first declined; but on the matter being pressed, I, very much against my own inclination, acquiesced; and I was accordingly, early in that year, returned for the borough

of Midhurst on the recommendation of Lord Warrington and at the instance of Lord Grenville.

Up to this period I was a total stranger to Lord Howick, nor have I reason to suppose that my name had ever occurred to his lordship's mind or passed his lips, except on the occasion of my intended dismissal from the office of Attorney-General.

In March, 1807, I went to Parliament. I never saw Lord Howick but in the House of Commons, and had no interviews with him, confidential or otherwise. On the breaking up of that administration, I went to Ireland, and returned in consequence of a letter from Mr. Wickham, expressing Lord Grenville's wish that I should be present at the discussion which was to take place after the recess, on the dismissal of Ministers. I attended and spoke, stating strongly my opinion of the unconstitutional nature of the pledge, which was supposed to have been required from Ministers, as the condition of their continuance in office, and my apprehension as to its effect in Ireland with reference to the Roman Catholics.

I returned to Ireland, when I was applied to by the new Ministry, requesting my continuance in the office of Attorney-General, in terms too flattering to me to be repeated, and with a positive written assurance that no political conditions of any kind were imposed, but that the office was to be considered as a strictly legal appointment.

Parliament being at this time dissolved, and I being no longer a member of it, I desired time to consult Lord Grenville on the subject. He desired Mr. Wickham to inform me that he was of opinion, in which Lord Howick concurred, that the office could not, from its nature, be considered as unconnected with political questions, and that they thought I could not hold it consistently with

the opinions I had declared in Parliament with reference to the Roman Catholics.

On this opinion I had no hesitation in acting, and I resigned my office. From that period to the year 1813 I remained out of Parliament (having declined an offer which the Duke of Bedford was pleased to make once of a seat; an offer which I shall always recollect with pride and gratitude). In that year I was returned for the University of Dublin. I attended occasionally in Parliament, and always voted cordially on the Opposition side of the House, — their measures being such as I entirely approved of; though even then, and on the Catholic question, which was the principal one in which I interfered, I held opinions of my own, materially differing from Lord Grey's, and publicly avowed them, holding certain conditions as important and indispensable, which he considered as unreasonable or insignificant.

So far my Lords Grenville and Grey had entirely concurred; and so far, I had the satisfaction of cordially concurring with both, except in the instance above mentioned; but in the year 1815, on the important subject of the continuance of the war, Lords Grenville and Grey decidedly differed; it was impossible for me to follow both, even if I had been under any political obligation to follow either. My previous habits and personal feeling would have led me in a matter of doubt to abide by Lord Grenville's opinion; but I trust you will give me credit for higher and worthier motives, and believe that on that occasion I acted as I had done on every other, under a direct conviction that I was right. I differed from you and from many others from whom I was sorry to differ, but along with many others with whom I was proud to concur. You will excuse me if I add that I shall to the latest hour of my life, look

back with self-approbation to my conduct on that occasion.

I cannot say, however, that it was regarded with much complacency or charity by Lord Grey; dissent from his opinions being a heresy to which his lordship's principles of toleration have not, I believe, been usually found to extend. After this period, through the whole course of the questions connected with the internal disturbances of the country, and the strong measures growing out of them, I uniformly voted under the same view of the state of public affairs, which had governed Lord Grenville; and whenever I had occasion to speak on those subjects I expressed myself accordingly. Last of all came the Manchester business, which, it seems, has marked me as an apostate, or if I had already become one, has called out more zeal than his lordship thinks belongs to a character of that description. Now I desire to know on what ground Lord Grey feels himself warranted to use such language concerning me.

If authority alone were to govern me, why was I to defer to that of Lord Grey rather than that of Lord Grenville? How, or where, or why, have I become party to a contract which subjected me, if I made a choice between two contradictory opinions, to be branded as an apostate by one or other of the persons who severally entertained them? What has ever passed between Lord Grey and me (if the high respect and regard I entertain for Lord Grenville were totally out of the case) to debar me from the free exercise of my own judgment in any or in every point on which his lordship entertains opinions or fancies that he has principles? I am sensible of the utter disparity between his lordship and me, both in rank and talents; but I know of none in independence. Shall I stoop to the censure of Lord

Grey for my conduct on a question where I had the cordial approbation and concurrence of our lamented friend, Grattan? But without sheltering myself under the authority of that name, in comparison with which the most partial admirer of his lordship will not venture to place him either as a statesman or a patriot, I do not apprehend that I shall incur the charge of presumption if I say that on any point involving the law or constitution of these countries, I see no reason why I should yield my own judgment to his lordship's. Nor can I admit that in forming a sound judgment of the political circumstances of the country, and the wise administration of its concerns, if my own understanding and knowledge were in a state of pupillage, the discretion of Lord Grey is the guardianship to which I ought to confide them. But it seems my mode of discussing the question does not suit his lordship's taste for moderation, and deference to those from whom one differs. What I originally said on that question is published, and I will boldly appeal to any man who reads it, whether it contains any expression calculated to give offence to any person or party, or to warrant an imputation such as has been cast on me.

What I then said was met by argument, which I refuted, or endeavoured to answer. It was night after night reverted to and encountered by sarcasm, of which I do not complain, but to which I presume Lord Grey thinks I ought to have submitted in silence. When his lordship shall be so good as to exemplify in his own person the exact degree of forbearance, gentleness, and courtesy which he has determined on as the standard by which a public speaker is to be regulated, I shall be happy to study so perfect a model.

When his lordship condescends to make my conduct

the subject of letters sent to his friends in Ireland, I must presume for the purpose of being communicated, he ought to be prepared to state the grounds and facts on which he makes so serious a charge, and in such offensive terms. Were I disposed to surrender my discretion to my temper, and to use the first terms which might occur to me as best fitted to characterize his conduct in flinging out such an affrontful imputation, I fear I should have to reproach myself for violating the respect due to his lordship's rank and character, which it is not my wish or intention to do; but until he shall think proper to specify the grounds and facts on which he has thought himself justified in circulating a description of my conduct so derogatory to my character and so wounding to my feelings, I shall content myself with saying that Lord Grey knew what was my conduct in 1807, he had full opportunity of knowing it since, and if he has a particle of candour in his heart, he will own that he ought to be one of the last men in the empire to utter an insinuation that I have been swayed by an unworthy motive.

Excuse all this tedious, and perhaps you will say fretful statement. I write to you without any reserve, and I require no other secrecy than I presume was attached by Lord Grey to his communication with his friends in this country. I should wish that the substance of this, so far as it respects my vindication against the aspersion cast on me, might be communicated to Lord Lansdowne and Lord Holland. If they should think that I ought to be silent under such an imputation I should feel humbled indeed; but at the same time that I wish these communications to be made to them, I think I owe it to myself to add that as Lord Grey has chosen, for publishing his strictures on my conduct, the

moment at which there appears a probability of his being placed at the head of an administration, I avail myself of the same opportunity to declare that I never will accept office or favour from his lordship, and that I consider all intercourse and connection between his lordship and myself as at an end.

We have had a most flagrant outrage committed by the sheriff of the county of Dublin; you have seen the statement in the newspapers. I suppose the underlings of the Irish Government thought this country too quiet. If anything should result from it to the prejudice of the Roman Catholics, they will think themselves amply repaid, though the public tranquility and even the safety of their own Government are to be compromised by it.

Since I wrote this, I have just seen published in the *Freeman's Journal* a letter from O'Connell; he has availed himself of the folly of the people about the Castle to involve the Roman Catholics in the Queen's question, and not only this, but to urge them towards revolutionary movements, and to abandon all application to Parliament. I do not believe that he can succeed in this, but it tends to bring matters to a crisis, and the respectable part of the Roman Catholic body are bound to disown him. He evidently thinks that the storm is thickening in England, and looks for political co-operation in quarters where hitherto it had not been expected.

Let me know when you think the Roman Catholic question should be brought forward. I should think that about the 26th of February would answer. The agitation of the House of Commons may by that time have so far subsided as to allow the question a hearing, and the Irish members will not then have returned to their circuits. It should not, in my opinion, be announced until very shortly before the discussion. Whenever it is

to be, I shall give it my best aid, and if I am permitted will bring it forward in the way which I consider best calculated to give it a chance of success. In whatever hands it may be placed, or under whatever auspices brought forward, I shall always abide by it as the measure of all others most essential to public happiness and safety. God bless you, my dear Sir John; in every possible state of things, public and private, I am always yours sincerely and affectionately,

W. C. PLUNKET.

Lord Lansdowne to Mr. Plunket.

London, January 24th, 1821.

MY DEAR SIR,

The political events of the last six months have been so remarkable, and the effect they have produced in the agitation of the public mind so great, that I have more than once felt disposed to trespass upon your time and kindness by asking you to acquaint me with your sentiments, both on the state of affairs in our country and in this.

I should lately have felt no hesitation in doing so, if I had not thought that the peculiar circumstances attending the commencement of the present session might have induced you to be present, and that a short delay might afford me the still greater advantage of some personal communication.

A visit, however, which I have just received from our common friend, Sir John Newport, has decided me at once upon writing to you, and even that more fully than I had intended, in consequence of a communication which he has made to me by your desire. You will believe me when I say that I listened to some parts of it with very deep regret. The concern, however, which I

felt on that account was not a little diminished by the reflection which immediately arose, that I was myself in a situation, if not entirely to remove, at least materially to correct, an impression of a painful nature which appears to have been made upon your mind.

To enable me to do so, you will allow me to relate to you in perfect confidence and without reserve, what has recently passed between Lord Grey and myself.

Towards the end of October or beginning of November last, when the impolicy and misconduct of the Government in the proceedings against the Queen were daily becoming more apparent, I thought it right, for my own satisfaction, to have a full communication with Lord Grey on the state of public affairs, and on the various contingencies which might arise out of it, and which the barest possibility of their arising made it the duty of those who might be affected by them attentively and deliberatively to consider. One of the circumstances which I then urged was an opinion (not certainly new with me at that time, but which, upon that occasion, I felt myself particularly bound to state to him) that under any circumstances that might lead to the formation of a new administration by the individuals connected with the present opposition, it would be most material, with a view to the great national interests, as well as those of Ireland, locally considered, that your assistance and co-operation should be secured; that there was no office to which your public and private character and conduct might not entitle you to look, and that nothing had occurred in the differences which had taken place in the preceding session between the most honourable men, who had, upon so many great questions of national policy, cordially concurred, to prevent a political connexion,

which might, under such circumstances, become so desirable, if agreement upon other subjects made it practicable. To this opinion, expressed strongly as I felt it, I was happy to find (and feel great pleasure now in the recollection) Lord Grey give a ready and unqualified assent; and I can distinctly say that all that passed upon the subject left upon my mind the most clear and satisfactory impression that there did not exist in his a feeling or a wish different from my own in relation to it.

After what I have stated you will not be surprised when I add that to the fact of Lord Grey's having lately written in the terms mentioned in your letter respecting you, as you have not seen them in his handwriting, I must refuse my belief. My long knowledge of his open, frank, and sincere character, a merit which those who deny him every other would not refuse him, precludes, in my opinion, the possibility of his having concealed from me at such a moment, and in a communication which was in all other respects as confidential as I am sure it was sincere, those sentiments respecting you, if he entertained them, which the letter to which you allude would appear to have implied. My conviction is that it is impossible he can have written to that effect, either immediately previous or immediately subsequent to the time to which I am referring; and that it is impossible that he can have done so even under the immediate impression of the difference in opinion when it occurred, considering as I do the expression stated as every way inapplicable to that disinterested line of conduct which has marked the progress of your public life.

Thus much I have felt it due to say in justice to Lord Grey. For myself you will allow me to add, that few circumstances could give me greater pleasure than

to communicate with you in private, or to consider myself as acting with you in public affairs, which are now daily assuming a more serious aspect. On the last, it is for you to consider how far your opinions coincide sufficiently with mine to facilitate a connexion to which, on every account, I should attach so great a value; but I must at the same time express my sincere opinion, not founded upon the partiality arising out of a long intercourse and friendship, but from the best judgment I can form of the state of public opinion, that no administration or system of government can command the confidence of the most rational part of the popular party now daily increasing in activity and strength, so as to secure to the country anything like a strong and stable Government, of which Lord Grey did not form the head or a principal component part. It is difficult, I feel, for any party, numerous as that which composes the present Opposition, with the popular tide setting strongly in its favour, not to fall into some excesses of language, and perhaps even of conduct; but it would be much to be lamented if that or any other circumstance were to deter those whose independence of Government and whose talents might enable them to give a sound direction to opinion, from taking that active and prominent part which might be expected under such circumstances.

Whatever feelings or opinions you may entertain on these subjects, I am confident you will do justice to the sincerity and to the motives of what I am writing, and believe that no difference of opinion can alter the regard with which I remain,

My dear Sir,

Very faithfully and truly yours,

LANSDOWNE.

To the Right Hon. W. C. Plunket.

Plunket replied, expressing himself entirely satisfied, and in fact intimating that he had reason to believe that his information, as to the words represented to have been written or spoken by Lord Grey, had not been altogether correct.

END OF VOL. I.

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